IMPACT OF LABELLING ON STATUS : A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF AN 'EX–CRIMINAL' TRIBE IN KANPUR

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by

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to the

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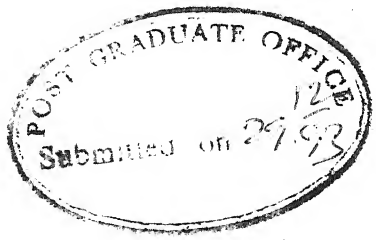

CERTIFICATE

It is certified that the work contained in the thesis entitled "**Impact of Labelling on Status: A Sociological Study of an `Ex-Criminal' Tribe in Kanpur**", by Ms. Shubhra Srivastava, has been carried out under my supervision and that this work has not been submitted elsewhere for a degree.

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Labelling or imputed differentness is an all pervasive phenomenon in everyday social interaction. It denotes an act of classification that puts mutually interacting actors in meaningful status categories. The present study is an attempt to analyse and understand the impact of labelling on status formation in a culturally unique social group called **Bhantu**. The study is grounded in the symbolic interactionist tradition.

The focus of investigation is on two primary types of labelling in human interaction viz. Gender and Stigma. Both types of labelling refer to life-long processes of situated behaviour that reflect as well as reproduce a structure of differentiation and control. The latter may be seen in the form of boundaries of social behaviour; patterns of domination and subordination; and group alignments in varying interaction situations.

The emphasis on gender and stigma labelling in the study is prompted by two previously known facts about Bhantus' social life : first, their stigmatization as criminals; and second, absence of `separate sphere' based division of labour between Bhantu men and women.

To facilitate comparative analysis, data have been collected separately for intra- and inter-group interaction situations.

changes in Bhantus' socio-economic life over a period of time; (ii) to describe socio-demographic profile of Bhantu households; (iii) to examine the nature of labelling in intra- and inter-group interaction situations with special reference to gender and stigma attributions; and (iv) to analyse the impact of gender and stigma labelling on social status through Bhantus' accounts of their intra- and inter-group interactions.

The dissertation contains six chapters. Chapter I introduces the conceptual framework employed to investigate the problem. The research methodology adopted in the study is discussed in Chapter II. This includes the sampling procedure, techniques of data collection and field work experiences. The primary data have been collected from Bhantu households (N=125) with the help of an open-ended interview schedule. In each household a male and a female, preferably a married couple, are intensively interviewed. The primary data are supplemented by oral history, group interviews and secondary information, such as media and official records.

Chapter III describes some important phases in socio-economic life of Bhantus and discusses their current socio-demographic profile. The findings show the changing nature of gender and stigma and their impact on certain objective indicators of status differentials among Bhantus.

The subjective meanings attached to gender and stigma labels and their impact on status positions in intra- and inter-group interaction situations are analysed in Chapter IV and Chapter V respectively.

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In the context of intra-group interaction situation, it was found that occupational involvements of respondents determine the

nature of interaction they have with fellow group members. The subjective meanings of labels used for mutual evaluations show gender specificity. The involvement in crime is not interpreted as discredited act even though it is disapproved by a few respondents. The stigma of criminality is, therefore, absent in intra-group interactions among Bhantus. On the basis of status accounts narrated by respondents, three types of status categories are discerned: challengers, conformists and compromisers.

The **challengers** (47.6%) constitute the largest section of Bhantu households. The men in this category are mostly in government jobs while women are housewives. Both men and women display a tendency to challenge traditional norms and values of the Bhantu commmunity. The boundaries of their social behaviour are flexible but women have limited freedom as compared to men. The challengers are positively evaluated within the group and are therefore influential. But the women of this category are subordinate to their menfolk. The group alignment pattern among challengers shows an element of exclusivity that probably emanates from sense of superiority. The **conformists** (21.3%) among Bhantus are those who are engaged in `unlawful' activities. Interestingly, there are more women in this category than men. They conform to the community way of living, approve indulgence in `unlawful' activities and rigidly follow traditional boundaries of social behaviour. The meanings of labels reveal that conformist women are positively evaluated within the group while men are deplored for their indulgence in crime. The influence of conformists is, however, limited in group activities. The group alignment pattern of the conformists shows

that they are accepted as normal members of the community. The **compromisers** (31.1%) among the Bhantus are those who disapprove of the involvement in `unlawful' activities but believe that they are the victims of their circumstances. The women in this category get the sympathy and cooperation of group members whereas men are not given any cooperation. The boundaries of their social behaviour are permeable and elastic. The women dominate in their interactions with the menfolk. The group alignment pattern of the compromisers shows that they attempt to gain sympathy of fellow group members by showing their helplessness.

In the **inter-group** interaction situation, the responses of the Bhantus reveal that the stigma of criminality has an over-arching impact on their interaction with other social groups. On the basis of their status accounts, respondents are again divided into three categories: conformists, challengers and compromisers.

The **conformists** (21.7%) among Bhantus are those men and women who reported cordial interaction with the outsiders. The men in this category are in secular occupations while women are mostly housewives. They conform to the outsiders' norms and values; and do not see themselves as negatively evaluated by the latter. The women, in this category, are subordinate to their menfolk and all major decisions in family related matters are taken by men. The group alignment pattern of the conformist men show their constant efforts to befriend their work-place colleagues. On the contrary, women do not have friendly ties with any `outsiders'. The **challengers** (41.7%) are those who maintain limited interactions with the outsiders. The meanings of labels that the `outsiders' use to evaluate this category of Bhantus

show that they are negatively evaluated in inter-group interaction situation. In turn, they also evaluate `outsiders' as hypocrites. The boundaries of social behaviour are rigid for both men and women in this category. They are the most hostile group of Bhantus and do not care much about outsiders evaluations. The group alignment pattern of the challengers show that they have instrumental relations with the `outsiders'. The **compromisers** (36.6%) in inter-group interaction situation are those who show ambivalence in accepting `outsiders' norms of social behaviour. Sometimes, they conform to outsiders' boundaries, but in the absence of any recognition, regress to their traditional ways of living. The domination and subordination patterns show that compromisers find themselves helpless while interacting with the outsiders. The group alignment pattern among the compromisers shows their constant efforts to redefine their status.

The summary and conclusions of the study are presented in Chapter VI. The study shows clear-cut situational variations in subjective meanings of gender and stigma labels. The corresponding changes in subjectively defined, redefined and negotiated aspects of dynamic social positions viz. boundaries of social behaviour, pattern of domination and subordination and group alignments are also found to be context-dependent. The study seeks to contribute to the sociology of disadvantaged groups in India. It has implications for effective implementation of Welfare Programmes

The study of status occupies a central place in sociology. The entire array of research on social stratification and relative deprivation of disadvantaged groups emanates from theoretical and empirical insights provided in these studies. The questions discussed are related to status formation, status set, status sequence, status differentiation, status evaluation etc.

There are two distinct approaches that have been followed in sociological studies of status. The first approach studies social status as a basic unit of social structure. The emphasis in this approach is on the objective aspects of social reality i.e. aspects that can be objectively studied with the help of operational parameters like income, occupation, education etc.

The second approach emphasizes subjective dimensions pertaining to the reality of social status. The protagonists of this approach consider social reality as inherently dynamic which is defined, negotiated and redefined in the course of social interaction. They conceptualize social status as dynamic social positions that emerge from the meanings social actors give to each other in various interaction situations.

This study follows the second approach in order to understand the dynamism in social positions of an 'ex-criminal' community called Bhantu. This group is settled on the outskirts of Kanpur city in the North Indian province of Uttar Pradesh.

The social life of Bhantu community has been a source of abiding interest to me. I have observed them from close quaters since childhood. Many men and women belonging to this group

used to come for help from Munna Bhaiya, a social worker known to me personally. Their problems were often related to harassment by police, government officials and neighbours. A strangely distinctive feature about their appeals was that they always justified their anti-social activities, knowing fully well that government and outsiders consider these activities as undesirable and, ofcourse, unlawful. Another interesting fact to note about these people was that women of the group played a very significant role in carrying out various unlawful activities of the group. Men who had found jobs in both formal and informal sector did not stop their women from indulging in these activities.

This background information has stimulated the process of shaping objectives of this study. The present study was planned to understand the disjunction between the perceptions of group members about their social identities in intra- and inter-group interaction situations. Later, occupational activities of the group were singled out for intensive analysis of status accounts in intra- and inter-group interactions

Bhantus are involved in activities that are considered `unlawful' and `deviant'. Women of the group play important role in carrying out these activities. These facts have motivated me to explore the nature of gender and stigma labelling. I have tried to analyse the impact of gender and stigma labelling on status, as accounted by subjects, in terms of social boundaries; pattern of domination and subordination; and group alignment. Thus, a subjective view of status differentiation has been highlighted in the present study. The study of status in this manner can provide new insights, for understanding the situation of socially disadvantaged groups.

This work would have never seen the light of the day without constant support and guidance given by my supervisor and programme coordinator Drs. E. Haribabu and Mrs. Raka Sharan. I will always be indebted to them.

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Finally, let me admit that without the endurance and patience bestowed upon me by GOD, I could have never completed this work. I dedicate this work to the Supreme Authority in the Universe.

December 1993

Shubhra Srivastava

DEDICATED

TO THE

GOD ALMIGHTY

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In the animal kingdom the rule is,

eat or be eaten;

in the human kingdom,

define or be defined.

Thomas Szasz (1974 : 20)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The study of the status of individuals and social groups is one of the major concerns of sociological research. It not only draws attention to diverse social relationships that individuals and groups develop but also shows their relative life chances and patterns of inequality. The question of relative social status has become more important in social scientific explorations of human societies in the wake of rapid social, economic and political changes and formation of new collectivities. The prescriptive role of such inquiry in state action for 'protective discrimination' also highlights the significance of studying status differentials in groups and communities.

However, the concept status itself, like many other concepts in sociology, is not uniformly defined (Wallace, 1983). The classic formulation of status and role concepts come from the work of cultural anthropologist Ralph Linton (1936). According to him, status is marked off by the fact that distinctive beliefs about, and expectations for social actors are organized around it. It is a position in some system or patterns of positions and is related to the other positions in the unit through reciprocal ties, by rights and duties binding on the incumbents. Role consists of the activity the incumbent engages in depending upon the normative demands of the society. Thus, Linton's conceptualization of status indicates a social determinism.

According to Bottomore and Rubel (1963), Marx has also conceptualized the status of individuals and groups in terms of their position in society. They argue that the bourgeoisie who

own means of production are more wealthy, powerful and enjoy higher status than the proletariats who own only their labour power. Mills (1965) also conceptualized status in terms of economic power but combined it with military and political power. This again indicates a kind of determinism in status differentials.

It was Weber (1964) who conceptualized social status as characteristic of social actors. According to him, 'status situation' (Standische Lage) of an individual refers to the evaluations which others make of him, thus attributing to him some form of positive or negative social prestige or esteem. Status, .thus, refers to the unequal distribution of social honour. A status group is a number of individuals who share the same status situation. Weber thus emphasizes the importance of meanings that social actors attach to each others' social positions.

The seminal ideas of Linton and Weber on social status became the basis of two distinct perspectives: role theory and symbolic interactionism. Role theorists stress on the element of coercion in cultural definitions and "the constraint that social structure with its functional prerequisites and prior order places upon any particular interaction" (Stryker, 1981). In contrast, symbolic interactionists stress the creative, negotiated aspects of situational definitions and derive certain ideas from these aspects to explain cultural change. They emphasize the ad hoc aspects of definitions and the way these arise in the course of interaction itself.

The basic orientation of this study is derived from the symbolic interactionist perspective which helps to understand status differentials among members of a culturally distinct group. The stress herein is on the process of labelling that denotes societal definitions of one's position in a social situation. The nature of two primary modes of labelling - gender and stigma are being studied in social life of a community described as 'criminal tribe'. The specific gender and stigma labels are empirically identified and oral accounts of members' status positions are recorded. The aim is to analyze social status on the basis of labelling process in intra- and inter-group interactions.

1.1 Labelling and Social Status

Labelling is an all pervasive phenomenon in social interaction and all interactions require labelling. We are all labellers and in turn get labelled. Positions of envy and ridicule - of high and low status - are created, bestowed, occupied and deployed by resorting to labelling (Goffman, 1972). According to Bailey (1966), labelling is used to rank people according to moral proximities. Several researchers like Bourdieu (1977), Kress (1979), Wood (1985), Blumer (1988), Root (1989) and Brown (1993) have referred to labelling as naming, typification, designation, definition, categorization etc. Status and worth are distributed according to this process. Thus, it essentially denotes an act of classification that puts mutually interacting actors in meaningful social categories. It also implies an act of valuation and judgement involving prejudices and stereotypes.

Labelling is a complex process involving considerations that are difficult to disentangle. Wood (1985) considers labelling as a process of assigning designations. These designations define parameters for thought and behaviour, rendering social environments stable and establishing spheres of competence and areas of responsibility. In this way, labelling can be seen as part of the process of creating social structure.

However, at the same time, labels as typificatory schemes or designations are relative and contingent. They are social constructs which reflect patterns of authority and the acceptance of it in context of particular interaction situation. Labelling is an act that involves conflicts as well as cooperation in relationships. Labels are more easily imposed on people and situations in unequal relationships of power.

Labelling thus involves some sort of societal reaction to attributes that social actors seeem to possess in interaction situations. Based on the definition, actors plan their own behaviour. They anticipate not only how others in the situation will act, but also what types of individuals those others are likely to be. Thus, definition of the situation is fluid and dynamic - denoting the meaning a participating actor places upon a social situation. The vocalization of meanings that actors attach to each other and to the social situation is reflected in the use of labels during the course of social interaction. By assigning ranks through labels, preferences are stated towards acceptable and non-acceptable. We use labels to identify ourselves with others who share similar preferences. Common consciousness and ideologies are constructed in this way.

It is not difficult to see that labelling in interpersonal interactions involves reciprocity. As a result of this, actors develop a self-concept and a "situated identity" which is specific to the situational context. While self-concept is a relatively persisting feature of an actor's personality, the situated identity represents his/her position or status in the given context. An interesting example of shifting status position is given by Ishwaran (1977) in his study of Shivpur village in Karnataka, where the goldsmiths assume different economic and social statuses depending on what situation they are in.

Each status position involves certain obligations and expectations which in turn may be the product of structural and cultural features of the society. Nonetheless, the corresponding behaviour of the actor is more akin to "role-making", rather than "role-playing". It indicates predominant influence of subjectively shared reality of face-to-face interaction.

1.2 Gender and Stigma Labelling

Gender and stigma are two primary types of labels that reflect as well as reproduce a structure of differentiation and control in a society. They are separately researched in existing literature. In the present study, however, both are treated as specific instances of labelling and/or attribution* process.

One may ask as to why a study of labelling should focus on gender and stigma attributions. The simple answer to this would be that both gender and stigma labelling appear to be the most

---

* Attribution and labelling are treated as synonymous concepts in the present study. As against the "labelling" theorists who have used these concepts in study of deviance, these concepts are here treated as general social processes.

primary and yet "taken-for-granted" ways of categorizing human actors during the course of social interaction. Being part of the 'reality of everyday life' they involve the conscious and therefore, intentional use by social actors, of a set of labels as typificatory schemes. Thus, one apprehends the other as a 'male' or a 'female' denoting labelling of gender and as a "a normal" or "a discredited", denoting labelling of stigma. This type of primary labelling determines one's "master status" in face-to-face interaction situations. The associated typificatory schemes consisting of culture specific sets of gender and stigma labels display the meanings social actors give to their social positions in specific social situations. These meanings determine the nature of locally generated social positions, roles and events.

1.2.1 Gender Labelling

The term "gender" has traditionally been used to designate psychological, social and cultural aspects of 'maleness' and 'femaleness.' Stoller (1968), for example, defines gender as "the amount of masculinity or femininity found in a person." The use of the concept of gender in the study of men and women has recently been contrasted with concepts of sex-difference and sex-role that are based on biological and social determinism respectively (Ferre and Hess, 1987). It is argued that gender is a principle organizing social arrangement, behaviour and even cognition in different societies. It encompasses the actual variation in men's and women's lives - individually over the life course and structurally in the historical context of caste, class, tribe and race.

Gender or gender identity refer to subjective sense of femininity and masculinity. In other words, what individuals perceive to be masculine and feminine is based on their belief about the social categories of men and women. It cannot be measured against the yardsticks of social consensus and distributional data. It is essentially a matter of social comparison in specific context. People and culture combine to produce many different definitions of gender related dimensions (Abrams, 1989).

Gender is then a social construct , involving use of labels to sex-linked differences between men and women. These labels refer to meanings and conceptions of what is "essential" to characterization of 'maleness' and 'femaleness'. They are ideals of masculinity and femininity, understandings about ultimate human nature which provide grounds for identifying the whole of the person (Goffman, 1977). The accounts of ways to excuse, justify, explain, or disapprove the behaviour of an individual or the arrangement under which he/she lives are normally given in terms of culture specific meanings and definitions of gender labels. The processes central to these accounts include ambivalence, conflict and rebelliousness, indicating that gender as a system of social relations is not a rigid or reified analytical category imposed on human experience. Rather, it is a fluid primary social category whose meaning emerges in specific social context as it is created and recreated through human actions (Gerson & Peiss, 1985). Moreover, like other social relations, gender is constantly being renegotiated and reconstituted (Margolis, 1985) and it is particularly visible at boundaries and points of change (Gerson and Peiss, 1985).

The central feature of all forms of gender construction is the attribution or labelling of 'maleness' and 'femaleness'. Kessler and McKenna (1978) have recognized the primacy of gender attribution in all social interactions. According to them, gender attribution forms the foundation of understanding other components of gender, such as gender role and gender identity. Reskin (1984) argues that gender attribution leads to categorization and stratification. This is also associated with social control as it involves definition of the situation.

In sum, gender and gender attribution refer to a life long process of situated behaviour that both reflect and reproduce a structure of differentiation and control. In such a structure, boundaries of behaviour, pattern of domination and consciousness of identities may be fluid rather than static (Gerson & Peiss, 1985). The analysis of gender labelling provides the understanding of processes through which value-laden definitions of social categories that justify and support the hierarchical social order are developed and changed.

1.2.2 Stigma Labelling

Like gender, stigma is also a basis of social relationships. Goffman (1963) has used the term stigma to refer to an attribute that is deeply discrediting. He, however, argues that it is the context and language of relationship that defines stigma. A stigma, then, is really a special kind of relationship between attribute and stereotype. It refers to those attributes which are incongruous with the existing perceptions of an individual.

Several studies have been conducted to explore the social consequences of stigma labelling. Scheff (1966) explains how

labels are more easily applied to socially marginal persons who could finally become social outcasts. Friedson (1970) also uses labelling orientation to propose an alternative concept of sick-role. Similarly, the societal reaction theorists working on deviance explain anomie, a subculture of non-conformity. The central idea is that social control leads to deviance. For instance, Becker (1963) formulates that social groups create deviance by making rules whose infraction constitutes deviance and when applied to particular people, label them as 'outsiders'. Lemart (1968) argues that it is only when rule breakers become the focus of public attention that they are transformed into full fledged deviants. Several other studies on social reaction have also focussed on the process of becoming deviants (Garfinkel, 1956; Becker, 1963; Kitsue, 1968; Shur, 1971; Velho, 1978). Beyond such traditional deviants as the 'mad' and the 'bad', the labelling theorists have recently included diverse elements within their purview such as, alcoholics (Wiseman, 1969), unwed mothers (Rains, 1971), perverts (Plummer, 1975); prostitutes (Heyl, 1979); HIV and AIDS patients (Douard, 1990; Cadwell, 1991; Crandall, 1991).

It is apparent that stigmatization or stigma labelling makes distinctions between normal and discredited. However, when a discrediting attribute is neither known to those present nor immediately discernible to them, the categorization of normal and stigmatized does not prevail. In such a situation, the person with stigma, though discreditable, is not proclaimed as discredited. The reaction of stigmatized person or group of persons would be different in both situations. In the case of an already 'spoiled social identity' because of the wide knowledge

of stigma, the issue is that of managing tension and anxiety generated during social contact with normals. On the other hand, if stigma is not known to others, then the response of the stigmatized would be to manage information about himself or herself.

The stigmatization can occur both in intra- and inter-group social interaction. In other words, it is an all pervasive phenomenon in social situations irrespective of discredited and discreditable nature of stigma. What is discredited in inter-group situations may be normal in intra-group situations. At the same time, considerations for stigmatization may be entirely different in intra-group situations. Thus, what is discredited in intra-group situations, may be considered as quite normal by the outsiders.

Stigma, then, is relative and context specific. Various societal definitions about stigmatized and normal are reflected in the use of specific labels or designations by actors. Nevertheless, the ways in which normals react to stigma and the ways the stigmatized react to their situation will be quite similar in most cases of stigmatization. Thus, normals generally believe that the person or group with stigma is not quite human. On this assumption, they exercise varieties of discrimination to reduce stigmatized individuals' life chances. They construct a stigma theory, an ideology to explain inferiority of the stigmatized individuals that accounts for the danger they represent. The specific stigma terms are used in daily discourse as a source of metaphor and imagery. Further, normals may perceive stigmatized person's defensive response to his situation

as a direct expression of his defect and then see both defect and response as a proof of something that he or his parents or his community did.

The stigmatized, on the other hand, may feel that he/she is a full-fledged normal human being, and that normals are the ones who are not quite human. Notwithstanding, the central feature of the stigmatized individual's situation in life relates to his/her acceptance by normals. Therefore, the stigmatized individuals either try to correct their failing or try to use it for 'secondary gains' as an excuse for failure or ill success and similar consequences.

The process of stigma labelling implies some notion of deviance. Goffman (1963) considers deviance as a bridge which links the study of stigma to the study of the rest of the social world. It is the societal reaction to 'primary deviance' that produces marked changes in the social situation of the person or group that possesses stigma. As a result of stigmatization, the original causes of deviation recede and give way to the central importance of the disapproving, degradational and labelling reactions of society (Lamert, 1967). The negative affects of stigma are, thus, a product of the societal definitions.

It is apparent from the review of literature on gender and stigma that both are treated as culture-specific ways of categorizing human actors' "situated identity" in interaction situations. However, there is no effort made to study mutually interacting influences of these two primary processes on social life of groups and communities. Both are studied separately with a focus either on their normatively determined structural

dimensions or on their socially constructed nature in different societies. Some theoretical studies have also been done but again the focus is on the separate treatment of gender and stigma in face-to-face interactions.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The significance of gender and stigma labelling, though universally experienced in human societies, is most prominently felt in social lives of certain tribal groups in transition. A few such groups in India are categorized as "ex-criminals" or denotified community. Historically these groups used to make their living by involving themselves in jointly sustained criminal activities. In other words, men, women and children used to take part in systematically planned "criminal" activities with clearly defined responsibilities. This peculiar division of labour was a cultural trait of these groups. According to Simhadri (1975) such groups accept criminal activities as their way of life.

The Government of India during British rule passed Criminal Tribes Act in 1871 and recognized criminal behaviour as an inherited trait. Under this Act some castes and tribes 'committing crime' were categorized as "criminal tribes". The activities of these groups were sought to be monitored and controlled by Criminal Tribes Act. Later on, members of such groups were kept in various prison-like settlements. The Government of India after independence denotified these groups and attempted to bring them closer to the social mainstream through various legislative and administrative measures. The ameliorative measures introduced by the government have yet to

achieve the desired impact on social lives of these groups. They still continue to experience disabilities associated with their stigmatization as criminals in the past. These groups have been exhibiting a tendency to fall back upon their traditional way of life.

The available literature on 'ex-criminal' tribes provides some accounts of their origin and social organization. Bhargava's (1949) study gives a brief account of social life of various criminal tribes in northern India. Studies by Majumdar (1958), Kennedy (1985) and Raha & Coomar (1989) are anthropological accounts on origin of denotified tribes. They highlight the importance of anthropological and sociological understanding of social life amongst denotified groups. Sher Singh's (1965) study on Sansis, a denotified tribe of Punjab, reveals unknown facts about the origin and cultural life of Sansis. He argued that Sansis are not aboriginal, but Rajputs who lack the outlook and traits of a specific tribal world. Halbar (1986) attempted to capture the dynamics of social structure and culture of the Lamhanis of Karnataka. The study by Shastry and Goyal (1969) on attitudes and motivations among denotified tribes brings out the factors responsible for the failure of these tribes to integrate themselves into the social mainstream. Researchers dealing with the upliftment of denotified tribes (Saxena, 1975; Bhowmick, 1989) evaluated the effectiveness of government programmes and have concluded that the most needy groups among them have not benefitted by government policies.

A study of criminal behaviour among Mang Garudis of Bombay (Clarence, 1968) has tried to relate criminality persisting among the denotified to the functioning of Indian social structure. A

few studies have also pointed out that criminality is acquired like any other behaviour depending on the training and association of group members (Simhadri, 1975).

Though these studies have attempted to document previously unknown facts about denotified groups, the subjective understanding of their predicament in the transitional society is entirely missing. For instance, there is hardly any account available as to how members of this group interpret their social positions vis-a-vis others in the group and outsiders. There is no attempt made whatsoever to explore why members of these groups indulge in crime even today.

The present study attempts to explore the social life of one such denotified group called the 'Bhantus' settled in the District of Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh. The attempt is to see how 'imputed differentness' affects Bhantus' social status in intra- and inter-group interaction situations.

The nature of imputed differentness has been analyzed by identifying typifications resulting from the use of gender and stigma labels in intra and inter-group interactions. The aim here is to study the combined impact of gender and stigma labelling from the accounts of social status given by the men and women of the community.

The study thus tries to explore the situationally determined nature of status positions. The significance of labelling has been shown as a source of meanings that actors give to their dynamic social positions in different interaction situations. The process by which differential labelling in socially diverse

situations results in status asymmetry and status ambiguity is also highlighted.

1.4 Theoretical Framework of the Study

The process of labelling and its significance in social actors' attempts to define their status positions can best be approached from the perspective of social situations and the public order sustained within them. For it is in social situations where two or more individuals are physically in one another's "response-presence". They label others and, in turn, get labelled contributing to 'definition of the situation' and 'negotiated social order'.

In the sub-section that follows, the theoretical basis of the research problem is described. In the next sub-section the conceptual framework of the study is enunciated.

1.4.1 Theory of Interaction Order

It was Erwing Goffman (1959; 1961; 1963a; 1963b; 1968; 1971; 1972; 1976; 1977; 1983) who first proposed the study of interaction order* in diverse social situations. He considers face-to-face interactions as a substantive domain. He argues that isolating the interaction order from among several present in social situations provides means and a reason to examine different societies comparatively and a single society historically (Goffman, 1983).

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* The term 'interaction order' may be used synonymously with other terms used by Goffman viz. encounter, focussed gathering, and situated activity system. For the purpose of the present study they all connote the same meaning.

Goffman (1961) defines interaction order as one type of social arrangement that occurs when persons are in one another's immediate physical presence. For the participants, this involves a single visual and cognitive focus of attention; a mutual and preferential openness to verbal communication; a heightened mutual relevance of acts; and an eye-to-eye ecological huddle that maximizes each participant's opportunity to perceive the other participant's monitoring of him. The most crucial aspects of these communicative arrangements are the use of expressive signs, gestures and labels by the participants to acknowledge or ratify their presence.

A systematic and formal study of interaction order is possible by focusing our attention on what Goffman calls rules of irrelevance, realized resources and transformation rules.

The 'rules of irrelevance' pertain to the social organization exhibited in interaction order. This "sanctioned orderliness" emerges from obligations fulfilled and expectations realized by the participants in the interaction. Nonetheless, what is more important is that this order is the result of definition of the situation that pertains to what is attended and unattended in the interaction situation. This leads to the establishment of boundaries of social action for the participants. These boundaries of social behaviour may represent the micro-structure of the interaction order.

The 'realized resources' refer to a matrix of possible events and a cast of statuses and roles in the interaction order. According to Goffman, an interaction order constitutes 'world-building' activities, that is, serious interactions generate a

world of meanings that is exclusive to it. The historical and structural factors do have a role in the generation of meanings. However, the focus is on locally realizable events, roles and statuses. Thus, for example, status or position is not a part of a pattern or system of relationships in the concrete sense. When status and role are studied, the focus is on the situation of someone of a particular analytical category. An individual's position in some sphere of life is his "situation" in a place and time - the image that he and others come to have of him; the pleasures and anxieties he is likely to experience; the contingencies he meets in face-to-face interaction with others; the relationships he is likely to form; his probable alignment; and stand on public issues etc.

The 'transformation rules' refer to the allocative processes in interaction order. Locally generated meanings of honour, prestige etc., are allocated to participants on the basis of their attributes that may also be generated during interaction. Nevertheless, attributes that are external to the boundary of interaction order may also be considered relevant in certain cases. Those attributes are most prominently reflected in the type of labels used in the communication arrangement of interaction order. The use of labels or labelling, thus, implies a set of implicit rules, both inhibitory and facilitating, that determine face-to-face instances of status patterns, typical roles etc.

An elaborate conceptual scheme has been developed by Goffman (1961, 1963b, 1977) to understand the dynamics of interaction order formalized in terms of rules of irrelevance, realized resources and transformation rules. This includes concepts like

gaming, encounter, spontaneous involvement, ease and tension, incidents, integration, flooding out, structure and process, interaction membrane, expression of identity, information management, embracement of roles, role distance, virtual social identity, actual social identity, institutional reflexivity etc.

The underlying idea in all these concepts is of negotiation. The participants in interaction order constantly try to negotiate their "ego identities" on the basis of which they align in groups and categories. The negotiated social order thus represents categories of participants in the interaction order.

Nandi (1980) has extensively used these concepts to define a situation involving heckling behaviour. Kahne and Schwartz (1978) show how negotiated achievements of persons involved in "trouble" and its management emerged as highly plastic social phenomena containing a multiplicity of potentially attentive interpretations and rich possibilities of therapeutic improvisation. Fishman (1978) has studied male-female hierarchy in everyday interactions. He described conversational strategies used by men and women as interactional manifestations of power relations.

Recently, Margolis (1985) has used concepts of negotiated social order and definition of the situation to highlight processes of social maintenance and social change with reference to the meaning of "woman". She introduces the concept "redefinition negotiation" and describes five cases related to meanings of women using this concept. Gerson and Piess (1985) employ interactionist approach to reconceptualize gender relations in terms of boundaries of behaviour, negotiation and domination and consciousness.

In India, Unnithan and Kumar (1991) show how differences between insider and outsider representations may create misleading identities of Girasia tribe in Rajasthan.

In sum, most studies based on the analysis of interaction order show how subjective meanings became objective realities by the process of definition, negotiation and redefinition. They attempt to capture processes through which social structures develop and change in any given community or society.

1.4.2 Conceptualization in the Present Work

This study is an attempt to understand the socially constructed nature of status positions in a highly culture specific setting. It has been argued that meanings given to status positions by a category of individuals depend on the dynamics of socially situated interaction orders.

The interaction orders related to the activities through which Bhantus make their living have been studied in two social situations. These social situations involve Bhantus' interactions with in-group (community) and out-group (outsiders) members respectively. The objective is to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of locally generated status positions and their consequences for social life in two exclusive social environments.

The labelling of gender and stigma during interactions in both intra- and inter-group situations has been conceptualized as modes of communicating perceived "differentness" by participants. In fact, both gender and stigma labelling represent processes of control, regulation and management of interaction order specific status positions.

The specific gender and stigma labels are identified by exploring the attended and unattended dimensions of social life in occupational interactions with in-group and out-group members. The gender labels are identified in terms of the meanings of 'maleness' and 'femaleness'. The stigma labels*, on the other hand, are identified in terms of their impact on social and personal identities of members of Bhantu community. The use of stigma labels in terms of gender categories is also identified. Both, gender and stigma labels represent the allocative attributes that determine the meanings of honour and prestige attached to one's dynamic social position in interaction with in-group and out-group members.

The accounts of status positions as narrated by respondents are analyzed in terms of:

(i) boundaries of social behaviour;

(ii) patterns of domination and subordination; and

(iii) group alignments

These describe status positions of different categories of respondents. The boundaries of social behaviour are rules of approval and disapproval in a social situation. These rules represent differences and commonalties between mutually interacting social actors. They denote strength and permeability, rigidity and elasticity of social norms during interactions in various social situations. The pattern of domination and subordination shows the relative control over life chances of

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* When a stigma label affects social identity, the stigma attribute is known to others. However, in the case of personal identity emerging from a stigmatizing attribute, the latter is not known to others or is hidden.

social actors (e.g. how one supports or challenges the existing distribution of resources and privileges). The group alignment pattern shows participants awareness of obligations and expectations and their attempts to form small groups through expression of identities.

The attempt to study status positions in terms of Bhantus definitions of boundaries; domination and subordination; and group alignment aims at demonstrating the fluid and dynamic character of status positions. The attempt is to show that status positions are defined, negotiated and redefined. These social position change and/or come into conflict with each other during the course of interaction process. The study attempts to interpret the meanings that Bhantus give to their status positions in day-to-day interaction.

Figure 1.1 gives a bird's eye view of the conceptual framework of the present study:

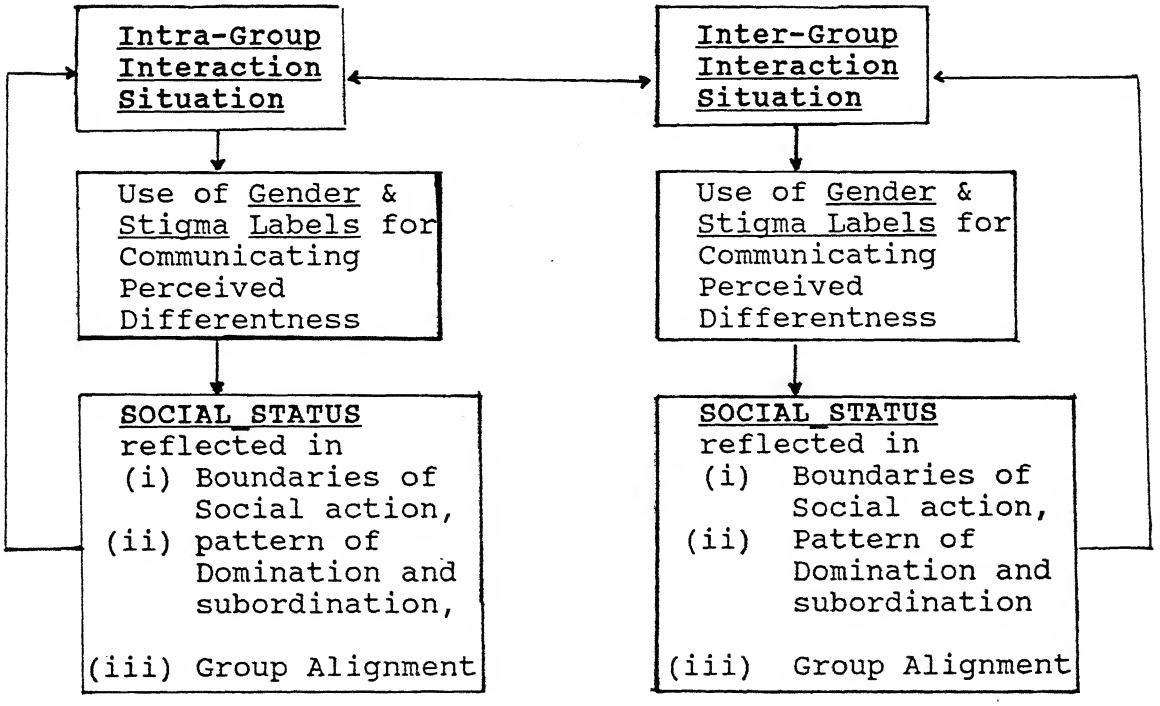

FIGURE 1.1 : A SUMMARY OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

(i) to delineate changes in Bhantus' socio-economic life over a period of time;

(ii) to describe socio-demographic profile of Bhantu households;

(iii) to examine the nature of labelling in intra- and inter-group interaction situations with special reference to gender and stigma attributions; and

(iv) to analyse the impact of gender and stigma labelling on social status through Bhantus' accounts of their intra- and inter-group interactions.

1.6 Overview of the Present Work

Keeping in view the aforesaid objectives, the thesis has been organized into six chapters. Chapter I, which is the present chapter, introduces the problem and outlines the conceptual framework of the study. Chapter II describes the research methodology of the study. Chapter III deals with the social background and current socio-economic and demographic profile of the Bhantu community in Kanpur. Both historical and current empirical data about various dimensions of Bhantus' social life are presented. Chapter IV focuses on the nature of intra-group interactions among Bhantus. It deals with the analysis of the nature of gender and stigma attributions and their impact on members' social status, accounted by them. The

focus of Chapter V is on Bhantus' interactions with 'outsiders'. The nature of gender and stigma labelling and Bhantus' accounts of their social status are analyzed in the context of inter-group occupational interactions. Chapter VI presents the summary of findings and conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The preceeding chapter introduced the research problem and discussed the theoretical framework. The objectives of the study were also elaborated therein. This chapter deals with the research strategy adopted in the present work. The problems encountered during the field work are also discussed.

The controversy regarding relative merits of quantitative and qualitative methods of study has generated an intense debate among social scientists. Quantitative methods imply that social phenomenon can be observed and measured objectively. Further, empirical generalizations may be made on the basis of survey research through which data are collected from a small sample or a subset of a population. Qualitative method on the other hand lays emphasis on understanding the subjective meanings that actors attach to their actions.

To avoid this controversy, the social scientists have emphasized the use of multi-method techniques or synthesis of styles. This is also known as "triangulation" (Brewer and Hunter, 1989). Triangulation involves collecting different types of data from different sources with respect to a single research question. The investigator's observations and interpretations about the behaviour or actions should be cross-checked with those of the people under study. In the present work simple quantitative procedures like counting and cross-tabulations, and qualitative methods like in-depth interviews, group discussions and oral history are employed to elicit data from members of the Community under study.

2.1 The Field Setting

The community selected for the study is known as 'Bhantu', one of the many 'ex-criminal'/denotified tribes of India (refer Appendix A). A settlement of Bhantu is located in Uttar Pradesh. The residential settlement/Basti of Bhantus is situated at Kalyanpur, a suburb of Kanpur city. Kanpur is a well known industrial metropolis of North India and is the largest city in the state of Uttar Pradesh. During the last two centuries or so, Kanpur has grown from a small village into an industrial metropolis. Its population has risen from 1, 51, 444 in 1881 to 21, 11, 284 in 1991.

When the settlement was established over an area of 158.3 acres in 1922, Kalyanpur was outside the municipal jurisdiction of Kanpur city. Now Kalyanpur has become an enclave in the city. The Kalyanpur settlement was initially known as the Criminal Tribes Settlement (C.T.S.). After the denotification in 1952 'Criminal Tribes' were included in the category of Schedule Castes. The official name of this settlement was also changed to "Rajkiya Unnayan Basti". The Basti, situated in Kalyanpur, is now surrounded by housing colonies, a market, a police station and prestigious educational institutions like Kanpur University, National Sugar Institute and Indian Institute of Technology. The Appendix B shows the map of Kalyanpur, Kanpur and location of the Bhantu settlement therein. The settlement/Basti has become a part of urban industrial milieu of Kanpur.

There are two denotified tribes living together in Rajkiya Unnayan Basti. They are "Bhantus" and "Haburas". The Bhantu households are selected for the purpose of the present study.

The reasons for selecting only Bhantus for the study are the following:

(i) 'Bhantus' are numerically larger than the 'Haburas'.

(ii) 'Bhantus' and 'Haburas' are not culturally comparable. Their language, rituals, traditions etc. are different.

(iii) To make the research more focused, the researcher concentrated only on Bhantu households.

2.2 The Sample

The universe of this study consists of Bhantu households in the Basti. According to the Economic Register (1990) maintained by the office of Uttar Pradesh Welfare Department, the total number of Bhantu households is 250.

Out of 250 enlisted Bhantu households, 125 households were randomly selected by 'domal sampling'*. A man and a woman, preferably a married couple in the reproductive age was selected from each household. The sample included 15 women headed households. These women were spouseless at the time of data collection, with no adult male members in the house. Thus, total 125 women and 110 men were interviewed.

2.3 The Nature of Data and Analysis:

As mentioned in the preceeding chapter, this study attempts to understand the reality from the actor's perspective. The crux

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* Domal Sampling is a special form of area sampling in which a systematic selection of houses in an area is done, e.g. every 2nd or 4th house in a certain block, street etc. with a specification of which person (like heads of households, housewives, any male member able to speak etc.) in each house. (English & English, 1958).

of this study's objective is inlaid in the nature of methodology. The perspective of the social actor is more significantly elucidated through subjective accounts (Scott & Lyman, 1968), first person responses of status situations. To capture the meanings which actors attach to their social positions, two kinds of data are collected: (i) primary, and (ii) secondary.

(i) The Primary Data

The field work which lasted for nearly one year from July 1990 to June 1991 was carried out with the help of semi-participant observations, group discussions, interview schedule and field notes for the purpose of collecting primary informations. An interview schedule containing closed and open-ended questions, was pretested on 25 randomly selected households. The interview schedule was later modified and divided into four sections. The first section contained questions pertaining to socio-economic indicators of status like income, education etc.. This information is useful in understanding the socio-economic status but does not provide an adequate basis for capturing the meaning which the actors attach to their social positions. For example, an individual who thinks his occupation is respectable might feel that in the eyes of others his job is not respectable. So the next two sections attempt to gather data on perceptions of the respondents about themselves in two interaction situations - intra-and inter-group respectively. Hence, in the analysis, excerpts from the indepth interviews are extensively used, to capture the meaning which Bhantus attach to their status positions in intra- and inter-group interaction situations. The last section of interview schedule permitted

them full freedom and flexibility to express their views on socio-economic problems and expectations from government's developmental apparatus.

The group discussions and informal conversations with elderly men and women of the community enriched the primary data on Bhantus' past and present social life.

(ii) The Secondary Data

Apart from primary information, the secondary data regarding the conditions which led to official stigmatization of Bhantus as one of the criminal tribes in the past were gathered from governmental and non-governmental sources. Governmental sources like archival documents, gazetteers, reports and land records available with the Welfare Department of Uttar Pradesh were consulted. At the time of the study it was noticed that in many cases the occupants of land or houses were not the legal allottees of land or houses. These discrepancies were noticed while cross-checking the data collected from primary and secondary sources.

In addition, media documents such as reports from national and local newspapers (refer Appendix D) and magazines were also utilized. They provide relevant informations on various issues related to the 'anti-social activities' of the Bhantus settled in Rajkiya Unnayan Basti in particular and denotified tribes in general.

2.4 Experiences during Fieldwork

Approaching the group was itself a problem. This was due to the general impression about this group among people of different

castes and classes that the Bhantus are 'dangerous criminals' and that they would deceive 'innocents'. The very name of the Basti and its inhabitants would frighten members of other social groups, irrespective of age and sex. During the preliminary discussion with knowledgeable people living around the Basti the researcher was warned against taking an 'over ambitious' project. In fact, one of them suggested:

> **"Please take up some other research problem to study, don't go to that settlement, it is full of thieves, dangerous and notorious people."**

In spite of initial warnings from the people living outside the Basti, the researcher persisted with the intention of describing the reality from the point of view of Bhantus.

The community was approached with the help of a few influential persons* commonly known and respected in the community for their social work. They introduced the researcher to some elderly persons and leaders of two factions in the Bhantu community and to some officials of the government welfare department involved in the administration of settlement. The community members were given assurance that the interests in studying the group was purely academic and it would help in breaking the stereotyped image of the Bhantus among the other social groups. Further, they were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and hence they should not conceal facts.

It was difficult to convince the respondents that they would not have any material benefit by participating in the study. They

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* Whyte (1989) also mentioned the importance of contacts with influential leaders of the group being studied during the course of field work. Deutscher (1968) refers to such influential people as "providers of gatepass" or "gatekeepers".

were requested to help the researcher in proposing alternative perception about the community. After getting convinced about the purpose of study they were amused with the idea that someone belonging to another caste and that too a student, was interested in studying their way of life and listening to their experiences. One woman of the Basti remarked:

> **"Bechari padai ke liye sab kar rahi hai, kaun jane kab sabse bari afsar ban jayegi, aur hum logo ki samsayayein suljhane mein sahayata kare." (Poor girl! she is doing these things for the purpose of her study, who knows, one day she might become a big officer and help to solve our problems).**

It was observed that there were two groups within the community. One group was respected for the 'honesty' and 'integrity' of its members and the other was feared because of members' involvement in traditional activities. The division of the Bhantu community into two factions sometimes created difficulties for the researcher in her attempt to collect data.

One day, during an informal discussion with Bhantu men and women, the leader of the group, considered as 'notorious' within the community started shouting at the researcher. He angrily said:

> **"Aap humaari basti mein kiyon aayeen hein? Yahan aakar kya aap aur longo ke tharahan humlogon per Gandhi ya Nehru ke samaan jiwani likhengi? Humne aap jaise log bahut dekhein hein. Humlogo ke baare mein ulta seedha likhenge aaur badnam karke chale jayenge. Hum aap ko dekh lenge. Dekhein aap kaise phir Basti mein aa payengi?" (Why have you come to our basti? Are you going to write our biography like others who write on Gandhi or Nehru ? I have seen many like you who write bad things about us and defame. We will see to it that you never come here again).**

Later, community members cautioned the researcher against this man. However, other members of this man's family were

sympathetic and assured the researcher not to worry and that they would see to it that he did not harm the researcher.

To gain the confidence of the Bhantus, the researcher started spending more time with them, by frequently visiting some of the families and listening to their personal problems. The researcher's empathy helped in removing initial reservations about the study. No doubt, this close rapport with Bhantus paved the way for smooth data collection but it also increased the demand for personal help from the researcher. For example, some respondents wanted help in getting their children admitted to a nearby convent school. In one case a woman whose son died while working for a local newspaper wanted the researcher to accompany her in order to approach the concerned authorities for compensation.

Although these diversions stretched the period of primary data collection, they helped in establishing the genuineness of the researcher's purpose. It also enabled to ward off the influence of those who were hostile.

Though the language spoken by Bhantus is Hindi, the style of speaking created problems for the researcher in following their responses during the initial phase of field work. Later, when they became friendly they explained the meanings of some of the utterances and gestures which were incomprehendible earlier.

The attitude of Government officials, In-charge of the Basti, was discouraging. The officials were apprehensive of being 'exposed'. They attempted to discourage the researcher by saying:

"You may have to face problems because basti people are criminals and very dangerous ."

This reveals the perception of the officials who are supposed to work for the betterment of the community. It was observed on several occasions during the course of the field work, that instead of breaking the stereotyped image of the Bhantus, the officials reinforced the same.

The field work over a period of nearly one year enabled the researcher to gain crucial insights into the conditions of the Bhantus within the Basti. A typical quantitative survey research would not have been able to provide the understanding that the researcher acquired during the intensive field work.

The data gathered on the social background and current socio-economic and demographicprofile of Bhantus are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

SOCIAL BACKGROUND AND CURRENT PROFILE OF BHANTUS

This chapter aims at describing the social, cultural and economic conditions that led to the labelling of Bhantus as 'criminal' during the colonial rule. The labelling as criminals influenced Bhantus' way of life and their interaction with other social groups. Later on, denotification brought about further changes in Bhantus' interactions among themselves and with 'outsiders'. Their way of life has changed drastically in recent times.

The present chapter is divided into two sections. Section 3.1 highlights the Bhantus' socio-economic life, seen in terms of three distinct phases. The first phase is characterized by the unsettled life of Bhantus before the enactment of Criminal Tribes Act; the second phase starts with the enactment of Criminal Tribes Act till the establishment of the Criminal Tribes Settlement in Kanpur; and the third phase begins with the denotification of Bhantus after independence. Section 3.2 presents the current socio-economic and demographic profile of the Bhantu households included in the study.

3.1 The Phases in Socio-Economic Life of Bhantus

The origin of 'ex-criminal'/denotified tribe is a peculiar phenomenon in Indian history. A complete written history of these groups is not available. However, several views exist regarding their origin. Majumdar (1958) contends:

"There is a general misconception in the mind of an average citizen that a criminal tribe is of same social and cultural stock as the aboriginal tribe except that the former has taken crime as its profession and means of livelihood and has utilized its primitive tribal structure, characterized by phenomenal group solidarity and cultural homogeneity for unlawful activities."

A group of researchers consider criminal tribes as the descendants of the gypsy tribes (Latif, 1891; Archer, 1946; Russell and Hiralal, 1961). These researchers argue that because of economic pressure quite a few tribes have adopted the 'unlawful' means of subsistence.

Though one may find different sets of opinions regarding the origin of criminal tribes, it has been conclusively shown that these tribes were the original inhabitants of India (Risley, 1908). They are called by various names like Sansis, Sahasit, Bhantu etc. The Sansis call themselves Bhantu in their local dialect (Sher Singh, 1965).

According to members of the Bhantu community, their involvement in 'anti-social' means of living was due to the unstable political and economic conditions of the country before and during the colonial period. They trace their 'social degradation' to the siege of Chittorgarh by Allauddin Khilji in 1308 A.D. To save themselves from the inroads of Islam they became nomads and resorted to burglary and theft as means of livelihood. The Bhantus trace their descent from Rana Pratap of Chittorgarh in Rajputana (Bhargava, 1949; Majumdar, 1958) and project themselves as the 'then' freedom fighters.

Table 3.1 gives a bird's eye view of the distinct phases that brought major changes in the socio-economic life of Bhantus.

TABLE: 3.1

PHASES IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIFE OF BHANTUS

Phases	Main Features
Pre-Settlement Phase (Before the enactment of Criminal Tribes Act of 1871)	(a) Bhantu used to live like nomads, to escape conversion to Islam during Mughal period; (b) Bhantus earned their livelihood through 'unlawful' activities like, dacoity, prostitution and liquor-making. Social stigma of criminality was non-existent during this period; (c) Exposure of Bhantu community to formal education was absent; (d) Authority of the community panchayat was all pervasive; (e) No 'separate-sphere' based division of work between men and women; and (f) Exhorbitant bride-price was common in marriage exchange.
Post-settlement Phase (After the enactment of Criminal Tribes Act of 1871)	
(1871-1922)	(a) Implementation of Criminal Tribes Act, 1871 to check 'anti-social' activities of Bhantus; (b) Bhantus were indiscriminately arrested and imprisoned in various jails including distant places like Andaman and Nicobar Islands; and (c) Stigmatization of the whole community as criminal started during this phase.
(1922-1953)	(a) Bhantu as 'criminals' were settled in a prison-like reformatory. This led to the beginning of their settled life; (b) Almost total cessation of 'unlawful' activities and introduction of socially acceptable occupations; (c) Formal education was introduced among Bhantus; (d) Total restriction on women and children on movement outside the settlement; (e) The division of work was based on'separate-sphere'concept introduced by British administration in their social life; and (f) The practice of bride-price was sought to be removed by British authorities.

TABLE : 3.1 continued

Post Denotification Phase (1952 and thereafter)	(a) Bhantus are denotified as criminals and included in the list of Scheduled Castes by Government of India for Welfare administration;
	(b) Extension of several constitional facilities to Bhantus with an aim to enhance their social status;
	(c) Prison-like reformatory converted into a residential colony for Bhantus and they have freedom of movement;
	(d) Family structure changed from joint to nuclear;
	(e) Choice of multiple occupations; but re-emergence of 'unlawful' income earning activities among Bhantus;
	(f) Quite a few Bhantu women choose to be housewives; and
	(g) The practice of bride-price totally replaced by dowry in marriage exchange.

3.1.1 Pre-Settlement Phase (Before the enactment of Criminal Tribes Act, 1871)

Prior to 1871, the 'criminal tribes' in general and Bhantus in particular lived in groups consisting of 10-12 extended families under a tribal panchayat* and a leader. The authority of the panchayat was all pervasive. During this phase members of the community were united by bonds of kinship and feeling of belongingness. They followed norms of the tribal panchayat. Every activity of the group was directed towards the economic gains of the group as a whole.

They lived a nomadic life and kept minimum belongings like a cot and a few utensils. They generally earned their living through 'anti- social' means like dacoity, theft, prostitution, liquor-making etc. The division of labour among them was associated with the pre-dominant income-earning activity and was governed by the panchayat and its leader. According to Bhargava (1949),

> **" ... in their moral code or in the panchayat conventions stealing, robbing, deceiving or telling lies to others do not constitute an offence but on the other hand, are recognized as desirable for their welfare."**

During this phase they indulged in a variety of crimes and had no hesitation in adopting brutal and violent means to achieve their objectives. The division of work during commencement of an 'unlawful' activity was assigned on the basis of one's capability. There was no separate domain of work for men and women. Men, women and children took part in the economic activities of the tribe according to their capabilities Each

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* Panchayat was a gathering of local leaders of the community who took vital decision within the group. Henceforth, the use of this word will denote the same meaning.

member of the tribe was apprenticed in some activity. For example, nearly every child was taught the art of keeping small things such as a gold ring or a few coins in his/her mouth without being easily detected. Women of the tribe also helped in dacoity, thefts and liquor distillation. They were also given training in luring outsiders so that useful information could be extracted from them. It happened to the extent that:

> **"They gradually become dead to all sense of chance or morality and begin to believe that immoral intimacy with an outsider for the benefit of the tribe is not a sin but a virtue" (Bhargava, 1949).**

It was due to the sincere support of their womenfolk that the crime committed by them used to go undetected by the 'outsiders'. The members of the community generally had no objection if their womenfolk entered into 'immoral' intimacy with 'outsiders' so long as they were faithful in bringing economic prosperity to the tribe and helping in its 'anti-social' activities. In fact, they were rewarded by the community. Their 'physical charm ' and 'use-value' contributed to enhancing the exhorbitant bride price called Mootha*, in marriage practices. Girls were considered to be an asset by the parents and the community. This 'use-value' of women sometimes was a cause of intra-group rivalry among criminal tribes including the Bhantus. On the other hand, women of the group also had a right to choose their life partner but men were required to prove their mettle as a successful 'criminal' before the panchayat allowed them to marry. Thus, during this phase there was a keen desire among Bhantu men to be regarded as heros within the community. They always wanted

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* A form of exchange in monetary terms. The money is given in the form of cash and/or kind to bride side. It is called as Mootha in local dialect of Bhantus.

to excel in their traditional profession because of the social rewards.* The apprenticeship in crime was initiated among the children of Bhantu community at the earliest possible age i.e., when they began to notice and understand things. A number of customs were prevalent among these people which directly or indirectly encouraged their members to adopt these professions. A person who had no taste in crime was looked down upon as a coward and commanded no respect. Hence, in spite of hazards, penalties and restrictions, there were strong reasons and inducements for these people to indulge in 'anti-social' activities.

In essence, during this period, norms guiding the behaviour within the community were governed by the dictates of their panchayat. The Panchayat was the representative organization of the group vis-a-vis other groups. There was no sex-based division of work, each one was assigned duty depending on his/her capacity. The 'maleness' and 'femaleness' was governed by the definitions of the community at large and reinforced by the 'panchayat'. During this period their interaction with outsiders was very limited and group solidarity was strong.

3.1.2 **The Post-Settlement Phase** (After the enactment of Criminal Tribes Act of 1871)

The unstable political and economic conditions of India before 1871 gave impetus to the 'unlawful' activities among nomadic and economically under-privileged groups. The British Government started keeping vigil on their movements. These groups

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* The so-called dacoit Sultana of Bijnore district of Uttar Pradesh belonged to this community and his gallantry is still a topic of discussion among the Bhantus of Kalyanpur settlement.

were considered a problem for law and order machinery of the British administration.

It was in the beginning of 1871 that the Criminal Tribes Act was debated in the Imperial Council. This Act was enacted with the assumption that unless the entire tribe was brought under certain control, it would be difficult to detect the professional criminals in it. Hence in 1871, T. V. Stephens, a member of the Executive Council of the Viceroy, moved a bill for the enactment of Criminal Tribes Act. He appraised the Act in the following manner:

> **"The special feature of India is the caste system. As it is traders go by caste: a family of carpenters a century or five centuries hence will be carpenters, if they last so long. Keeping this in mind the meaning of professional criminal is clear. It means a tribe whose ancestors were criminals from time immemorial who are themselves destined by the usage of caste to commit crime and whose descendants will be offenders against law until the whole tribe is exterminated or accounted for in the manner of the thugs. When a man tells you that he is an offender against the law, he has been so from the beginning and will be so to the end, reform is impossible, for it is his trade, his caste, I may almost say his religion is to commit crime" (Sher Singh, 1965).**

Keeping the above belief in mind the Act was enacted in the whole of India. Later as a result of various recommendations, this Act was amended several times. In 1908 the first Criminal Tribes Settlement Act was passed. As the desired results were not achieved, it was amended again in 1911. On the recommendations of Indian Jail Enquiry Committee (1919-20), the Criminal Tribes Act was further amended in 1923 and remained in force from 1924 till its repeal. It was on 31st August 1952 that these groups were denotified as criminal tribes and were included in scheduled castes/tribes.

The labelling of a whole community as 'criminal' by the colonial government, led to stigmatization of the group as a whole. The stigmatization by the powerful colonial state not only gave a political and administrative legitimacy to the labelling but also led to drawing clear cut cultural boundaries between the so-called 'criminal tribes' on the one hand and the colonial government, upper castes and classes in Indian society, on the other. The repercussions of labelling as 'Criminal Tribes' due to the enactment of Criminal Tribes Act were noticed not only on their settled lives in reformatory like settlements but also had a lasting impact on their culture.

Before the settlements came into existence under the amended Act, the Bhantu men, women and children were put in various jails along with other criminal tribes, and a few were deported to Andamaan and Nicobar Islands. This restricted their movements and led to cessation of 'anti-social' income generating activities by them. As a result of declaration of Criminal Tribes Settlement Act (1908) the Bhantus were rehabiliated in one of the settlements established by the colonial government at Kanpur in the year 1922.

These settlements were established with a view to reform these groups by giving them 'adequate' facilities in every walk of life. By putting these people in the settlements, the colonial administration assumed that they would not only check the professional crime but also would be successful in changing their way of life. Motivated by this assumption the British authorities enforced Criminal Tribes Settlement Act 'arbitrarily and unjustly' on the whole community instead of enforcing it only on habitual offenders. The Kanpur Settlement was one of the

agricultural-cum-industrial settlements, with a cluster of houses surrounded by high boundary wall having a central gate. The gate was punctually opened in the morning for the Bhantu men who had passes to work outside the settlement. The gate was closed at sunset. The passes were issued by the manager of the settlement allowing the settlers to visit the market or seek employment or do a 'respectable' job. In the morning general attendance was recorded and at the time of sunset before closing the gate, a roll call of all the settlers were taken to check attendance. If at that time a settler was found missing he was charged and punished according to the provisions of Criminal Tribes Act.

The settlement in the reformatory changed the nature of the Bhantus' way of living. Those surviving on 'anti-social' means were now encouraged to take up 'socially acceptable' occupations. During this period the Bhantus' choice of occupations was governed by the colonial government. The colonial government irrespective of sex and age uniformly introduced formal, vocational education (e.g. carpentary, weaving, tailoring, smithy etc.) among the Bhantus keeping in mind their attitudes and interests.

Though women were given formal and vocational education, the British authorities strictly banned attempts of the Bhantu women for gainful employment outside the settlement. They believed that if the Bhantu women were allowed to work outside the settlement like the menfolk of the community in government owned factories and mills of Kanpur, they would disturb the 'peace' and 'tranquillity' of the area. The number of 'criminal' incidents would increase. The settlement in reformatories greatly influenced the gendered world of the Bhantus. The idea of

'separate sphere' i.e. outside/public sphere for men and housework/'private sphere' for women gained credence among Bhantus. During this period a new category of role, that is, the role of a full time housewife started taking shape among the Bhantus. However, a few women interested in working like men of the community were properly trained and were given employment in the garment factory situated in the settlement premises. A creche was also provided within the factory premises to take care of the children of these working mothers.

The administrative infiltration by the colonial government in the occupational choices of Bhantu men and women reduced the autonomy and authority of the 'panchayat'. During this period the distribution of income generating resources like, agricultural lands, jobs, work allocation and education became the responsibility of the colonial administration. The new occupations not only disturbed the earlier division of labour but also undermined the group life. Although the general system of patriarchy, patrilineality, patrilocal residence, family type, monogamy, caste/tribe endogamy and clan exogamy remained the same, the criteria of mate selection changed. 'Gallantry' in traditional occupations like dacoity, kidnapping etc. was changed to employment in 'respectable' (secular) jobs. Stability in marital relations increased as a result of new occupational activities of the Bhantus. The 'use-value' of women for the whole community declined. This was also one of the reasons for relaxation in the exhorbitant limit of 'bride-price'. The colonial government also fixed a limit on bride-price. The role of the tribal group as a corporate unit was undermined by the emphasis on individuals as wage earners.

Thus, the settlement helped the Bhantus to lead a disciplined and secure life. But, on the other hand, the confinement and restrictions on movements proved disastrous for their cultural life. A major limitation in this Act was that many innocent, disabled and even crippled persons were sent to settlements. As a result of association with a few 'hardened criminals', they acquired the label of being 'criminal' and learnt undesirable ways and habits. The police harassment continued even after establishment of the settlement. The police not only checked them at odd times of the day but also framed false charges and implicated them in offences. Due to official labelling as 'criminals' the employment opportunities for the Bhantus declined. No private entrepreneur was willing to offer employment to a person belonging to a community labelled as criminal. Bhantus were deprived of enterpreneurial activities and jobs in informal sectors as the people were generally suspicious of their conduct.

Gradually the Bhantu men, women and children got conditioned and lived in conformity to the definitions imposed by the authorities and other people. The labelling of the group was so strong that the British administrators started addressing these people as 'Hai-bura' (a person who is bad) in Hindi. This probably later contributed in distorting the name of a group of people as 'Habura' and the settlement as 'Habura basti' by the 'outsiders'. The repercussions of the Criminal Tribes Settlement Act were so deleterious that the wife of the then prison Governor, Margeret Wilson considered this Act as "genocide" for the whole community (sher singh, 1965)

3.1.3 The Post-Denotification Phase

The repeal of Criminal Tribes Act in 1952 brought changes in the lives of the Bhantus. During this period the Bhantus not only acquired freedom from prison like reformatories but were also included in the list of Scheduled Castes. As a result, they got the benefits of constitutional measures. This essentially meant a change in their status by redrawing the boundaries of the 'ex-criminal' tribe through legislation. However, the deeply entrenched cultural practices and meanings could not be removed by legislation. In this context it should be mentioned that legislations, though necessary did not suffice in obliterating the cultural boundaries between 'ex-criminal' tribes and other communities.

The constitutional protection along with denotification was extended in the areas of employment and education to encourage Bhantus to join the national mainstream. This meant that they would take up modern secular occupations in public and private sectors. Educational facilities were made available to Bhantus to speed-up their cultural integration into the wider social milieu.

The primary data collected for the present study from the Bhantu households exhibits noticeable changes in their world view and patterns of living.

3.2 Current Socio-Economic and Demographic Profile

The current socio-economic and demographic profile of Bhantus has been sought to be drawn with a view to objectively assessing status asymmetries among them. The major aim is to compare and contrast findings on objective indicators of status with subjectively felt notions of 'situated identity'. The socio-economic and demographic profiles of Bhantus are as follows:

(1) **Immigration**

As mentioned in the earlier part of this chapter, to change mode of subsistence of Bhantus, the British administration forced them to move to various settlements in Uttar Pradesh and other parts of India. The Bhantus have been living in Kalyanpur settlement for the last seventy years. The first settlers were from the neighbouring districts of Kanpur and from Andamaan & Nicobar Islands. None of the Bhantu respondents report that their ancestors came to Kanpur before 1920s.

In the present study information on place of birth and place of last residence was collected to examine the extent of immigration. The data shows that a large proportion of the Bhantu male respondents were born and brought up in the settlement. Only 3.2% of the respondents reported that they migrated from other settlements of Uttar Pradesh to this settlement. The reasons for this inter-settlement migration are as follows: (a) Kanpur being an industrial metropolis, they hoped to get greater job opportunities; (b) comparatively good facilities in this Basti; and (c) possibility for community's protection especially to members involved in traditional occupations like illicit liquor distillation, robbery, prostitution etc. The Bhantus are so attached to the Basti that when some of the residents employed in government services get transferred to some other cities, they leave their families in the Basti, and live alone at the new place of employment. Those who pursue 'unlawful' occupations also return back to the Basti after completion of their ventures.

It has also been noticed that 41.0% of the female respondents were immigrants. The reason for the immigration of the Bhantu women is related to marriage. The Bhantu follow norms

of patrilocal residence. Women who migrated after marriage were generally born and brought up in settlements and towns of Uttar Pradesh like Aligarh, Banaras, Gorakhpur, Lakhimpur, Lucknow, Mathura, Mirzapur, Moradabad and Panna (Madhya Pradesh). The data on the place of birth of women in the study shows that the Bhantu women have been living in government settlements/Basties and a few of them have been moving between settlements in Uttar Pradesh and other neighbouring states.

It has been seen that unlike pre-settlement phase characterised by frequent mobility, in recent times Bhantu men are less mobile and prefer settled life. Very few have moved into the settlement from other settlements.

(2) Age of the Respondents

The data on age composition of the respondents is shown in Table 3.2.

TABLE: 3.2

AGE OF THE BHANTU RESPONDENTS

Age Groups (in years)	Men		Women	
	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
15-25	12	(10.9)	32	(25.6)
26-36	54	(49.1)	68	(54.4)
36+	44	(40.0)	25	(20.0)
Total	110	(100)	(125)	(100)
Average Age (Mean)	31.36 years		31.28 years	
Minimum	20 years		18 years	
Maximum	66 years		45 years	

NOTE: The figures in parentheses are percentages.

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The above table shows that the majority i.e., 54.4% of the Bhantu women are of the middle reproductive age group. Though the majority of the Bhantu men also belong to the middle age category as women do, their percentage is less than that of women. In the age group of 15-25 years, the women are more in number than the men (25.6% women as against 10.9% men). The data also exhibit that in the category of 36+ (36 years and above), the proportion of men is more i.e. 40.0%, while that of women is only 20.0%.

The age of the Bhantu women respondents ranges from 18 to 45 years with a mean age of 31.28 years. In the case of men it ranges from 20 to 66 years with an average of 31.36 years. The variation in age among Bhantu men and women respondents in the study is due to differences in age at marriage. The Bhantu women get married at a relatively young age compared to men. This pattern of early marriage among women is universally found in India. The early marriage among the women increases their reproductive span and leads to greater number of child births.

(3) Marital Status

In the context of marriage, monogamy is a rule but in the case of death, divorce and separation, remarriage for both men and women is permitted by the panchayat. Unlike in the presettled phase, now there is greater degree of stability in marriage among the Bhantus. The data show that in the sample of 125 households the majority of Bhantu women (88.0%) are married and living with their husbands. In 7.2% cases, women are widows. The number of separated (3.2%) and divorced (1.6%) women is very less.

In contrast to the pre-settled phase, now the major reason of the separation and divorce among the Bhantus is dispute over 'dowry'*. The earlier exchange practice of 'bride-price' has been gradually replaced by exhorbitant amount of 'dowry'. The amount of dowry goes up with the nature of employment status of the boy. Those employed in government services, depending on their rank, demand dowry between Rs.80,000 to 1,00,000. On the contrary, 'bride-price' has become a symbolic ritual ranging between Rs.500 to 2500. Earlier on, women depending on their abilities to collect useful information commanded higher bride-price. But now the 'bride-price' is unaffected by the employment status of the Bhantu women.

None of the respondents reported any case of bride-burning resulting from dispute over the amount of dowry in their community. In fact, the respondents were critical of dowry and stated that the entry of the 'evil' tradition of 'dowry' is a result of their partial assimilation with the mainstream population. The interesting thing to note is that whenever there is a dowry dispute the panchayat settles it by asking both the parties to return each other's money and share the expenditure incurred in the marriages. The panchayat also sanctions the separation or divorce between the married couples. The legal divorce is discouraged among the Bhantus because they disapprove of making their internal affairs public which gives outsiders a chance to 'mock' at them. To maintain secrecy, they tend to abide by the traditional panchayat.

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* It is a form of exchange in marriage practices given in cash and kind to bride-groom's side from bride side. Henceforth, this term will denote this type of exchange.

(4) Household Size

The Bhantu households in the sample are divided into three categories in terms of their size (refer Table 3.3). The first category consists of the households which have members upto five. The second category consists of households having six to eight members while the third category of households with more than nine members. This categorization of household size to a certain extent reflects the Bhantus' definition of household size in terms of small, medium and big households.

TABLE: 3.3

SIZE OF HOUSEHOLDS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Size	Category	Frequency	(%)
2-5	members	25	20.0
6-8	members	60	48.0
9+	members	40	32.0
Total		125	100.0
Average size of the household			7.4 members
Minimum size			2 members
Maximum size			20 members

It is evident from the Table 3.3 that the average size of Bhantus households is relatively large. The size ranges from 2 to 20 members with an average of 7.4 persons. A significant proportion of the households (48.0%) belongs to the second category i.e. with 6 to 8 members. This is considered to be the normal size by the Bhantus. Further, 32.0% of the Bhantu households belong to the third category with 9 or more members. The proportion of the households in the third category (2-5 members) is one fifth or 20%.

The average size of Bhantu household, as mentioned above, is 7.4 members which is quite high as compared to other social groups in urban centres. It appears that the Bhantus have yet to adopt the norms of small family. The relatively large household size may be due to Bhantus' aspirations for higher standard of living.

(5) Type of Family

In order to describe the kinship composition of households in the Bhantu families are divided into four categories (refer Table 3.4).

TABLE : 3.4

TYPE OF FAMILY IN BHANTU HOUSEHOLD

Type of family	Frequency	(%)
Nuclear Families	59	47.2
Lineally extended families	31	24.8
Collaterally extended families	23	18.4
Nuclear families with their relatives	12	09.6
TOTAL	125	100.0

(i) Nuclear family

It consists of husband, wife and their unmarried children;

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(ii) Lineally extended family

It consists of a husband, wife, their unmarried children, husband's parents and unmarried brothers and sisters;

(iii) **Collatrally extended family**

This type of family consists of a husband, wife, their unmarried children, husband's married brothers, their wives and children; and

(iv) Nuclear family with other relatives

This type of family is composed of husband, wife, their unmarried children and persons distantly related to husband or wife or both, like husband's widowed/divorced sisters, wife's brothers, husband's uncle etc.

The data in Table 3.4 show that 47.2% of Bhantu households have nuclear families consisting of married couples and their unmarried children. The next category of lineally extended families constitute 24.8% of Bhantu households. About 18.4% of the households have collaterally extended families. In 9.6% of the households there are nuclear families with 'other' relatives. The 'other' relatives are generally earners and they contribute to the households' income. They reside with their relatives because of the need to have social and emotional security. An interesting feature is that in a few cases, the 'other' relatives are often women, who are separated/divorced and are full time earners contributing substantial sum of money to the maintenance of the household. Some of these women are engaged in prostitution and for them the need for social security is much higher because of their occupations. Residing with relatives gives them emotional support and enables them to avoid 'social ostracism' because of their involvement in an 'anti-social profession'.

A cross-tabulation of Bhantus household size by the type of family shows the relationship between household size and family

TABLE: 3.5

THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE HOUSEHOLD SIZE AND THE TYPE OF FAMILY

Size Category of the Household	Type of Family				Total
	Nuclear	Lineally Extended	Collaterally Extended	Nuclear Family with other relatives	
2-5 Members	19 (32.2)	06 (19.3)	-	-	25 (20.0)
6-8 Members	33 (55.9)	14 (45.2)	03 (13.0)	10 (83.3)	60 (48.0)
9 Members and above	07 (11.9)	11 (35.5)	20 (87.0)	02 (16.7)	40.0 (32.0)
TOTAL	59 (47.2)	31 (24.8)	23 (18.4)	12 (09.6)	125 (100.0)

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentage.

It has already been observed that the average size of a Bhantu household is relatively large i.e. above seven members (Table 3.2). The relationship between the size and the type of family shows that contrary to the popular belief that the nuclear families tend to be smaller in size, Bhantu nuclear families have a relatively large size. Out of 59 households with nuclear families, 40 or 67.7% have six or more than six members, namely, wife, husband with not less than four children. As mentioned earlier, it may be because of the Bhantus' long held belief of an ideal family size. Most of the respondents living in nuclear families expressed that an ideal family should have two or three sons and one or two daughters. In the case of households with lineally extended families, majority of them in fourteen

households have six or above six members and eleven have over nine members in each household. Out of 23 households with collaterally extended families, three have between six to eight members while twenty have nine or over nine members. Households with 'nuclear families with other relatives' bear resemblance to households with 'nuclear families' in the sense that a large proportion of them have six to eight members.

One can see a perceptible change in Bhantus' attitude towards household size and sex preferences of children. It has been observed that households with nuclear families (Table 3.4) are relatively large. This is due to change in Bhantu preference of children. In pre-settled phase, there was no clear cut preference in favour of either a girl or boy among the Bhantu couples. Girl child was as desirable as a male child because women's role in the economic activities of the community tended to be significant. But of late there has been a tendency towards male children a result of their changing value system, and of their partial assimilation with the mainstream culture. For example, when the respondents were asked to give reasons for a big family and preference for male children, one woman respondend by saying:

> **"Arye sahib ladka nahein hoga to budape mein roti aur marne per mukh mein aag kaun dega?" (If there is no son, who will give food in old age and who will cremate the parents?)."**

In essence, the data show that notwithstanding the fact that the Bhantus are exposed to and are influenced by the urban culture, they do not seem to be aware of the government's emphasis on small family norm, i.e., two children per couple.

(6) Education

With regard to education it has been observed that since independence Bhantus have made remarkable progress in getting themselves educated. As mentioned earlier, the British administration made formal education compulsory and as a result of their initial exposure to education, literacy is widespread among them. The data on Bhantu households in the sample reflect this trend.

Table 3.6 indicates that there is not only an increasing acceptance of school education among Bhantus but also an interest in college education. The majority of Bhantus in the sample are literate. It may be interesting to mention that the literacy rate of the Bhantu men and women is higher than that of either Kanpur district or Uttar Pradesh or even the nation as a whole. According to the Census of 1991, in case of Kanpur Nagar (city), out of 58.8% literates, 70.9% are men and 29.0% are women. With regard to Uttar Pradesh the total literacy rate is 41.7%. Out of this 26.0% are males and 5.3% are females.

In the sample it has been observed that 96.3% Bhantu men are literate as against 73.6% of Bhantu women. When probed about their unusually high literacy level, the respondents themselves praised the efforts of colonial government in this regard. The colonial government, at the time of their settlement, made education compulsory irrespective of age and sex. The British administrators not only forced them to go to the school located in the settlement premises, but also gave incentives like scholarships on the basis of merit, free stationery etc. These subsidies are still continuing in the settlement school run by the State Welfare Department. However, our respondents complained

TABLE: 3.6

EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF BHANTUS

Levels of of Education	Men		Women	
	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
Illiterate	04	03.6	33	26.4
Primary	15	13.6	54	43.2
Secondary	67	60.9	35	28.0
Higher Secondary	11	10.0	02	01.6
Graduate	08	07.3	01	00.8
Postgraduate	05	04.6	-	-
Professionals	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	110	100.0	125	100.0

that now the government is not taking adequate interest in fulfilling educational needs. They also complained that there is indiscipline in the school, children are losing interest, teachers are corrupt and there is no provision for further schooling for the interested children in the settlement. Though the government has sanctioned money for renovation and extension of the school building and provided resources for the promotion of education in the school, the administrators-in-charge of the school do not seem to take adequate interest.

The respondents feel that till now they have been benefited by the reservations in jobs even without the high level of education but now, as a result of increase in the schedule caste population, competition amongst themselves is increasing. Very soon a stage will come when educational achievements and merits will play a crucial role in job distribution among schedule castes. This is the reason why Bhantus take more interest in education. In fact, now they are sending their children to various other 'good' schools outside the Basti.

Although literacy levels of both men and women in the sample are high as compared to that of the Kanpur city or Uttar Pradesh or even the nation as a whole, the illiteracy among women is as much as 26.4% as against 3.6% of men. The difference between the proportion of illiterate among men and women is substantial. This difference increases as one goes to higher level of education. For example, in contrast to the Bhantu men (13.6%), a greater percentage of the Bhantu women (43.2%) are educated upto the primary level. A significant proportion (60.9%) of the Bhantu men have completed secondary level as against 28.0% of the Bhantu women. One may see a continuation of the same trend at other higher levels of education. For example, 10.0% men are educated upto higher secondary level as against 1.6% of women. College education is less significant among Bhantu women; only 0.8% of them have attained education upto the graduation level. On the contrary, 11.9% of the Bhantu men have attained college education. In fact, 4.6% of Bhantu men in our sample are postgraduates.

The analysis of the level of education of the Bhantus highlights the sex-based differentials in educational attainment. A comparative analysis of education of Bhantu men and women reveals that a greater percentage of the Bhantu men are literate and that there is also a significant difference in the levels of education attained by the Bhantu men and women. The respondents were asked as to why there was difference between men and women in terms of their educational attainment. They gave reasons like absence of colleges for women in a nearby place, financial constraints, absence of freeship or incentives from the government side. According to them, the job opportunities for men are 'shrinking',

and if the women start going for higher education they will further deprive their menfolk of employment opportunities in government sector. One of the respondents said:

> **"Arye ladkiyon ko ziyadha padha kar kiya karna hai, akhir mein chauka chulha hee tou karna hai (What is the use of higher education for girls? After all they have to cook food at home)."**

Another respondent gave almost a similar answer. She stated:

> **"Arye shadi ke baad to achhe ghar ki ladkiyon ko ghar grahasti dekhni padti hai, aur jiyada padai karengi tou naukari bhi karna chahegi, jo aaj-kal milna mushkil hai". (Girls from good families should look after the household affairs after marriage. If they go for higher education, it is obvious that they will look for jobs, which are difficult to get nowadays)."**

To summarize, one may notice that the educational differences between men and women show that fewer women, as compared to men, attain high level of education which is in conformity with the general trend in the country. However, as far as primary education is concerned, a relatively higher proportion of Bhantu women as compared to proportion of women all over India, have attained primary education.

(7) Occupation

Table 3.7 exhibits the distribution of occupations among men and women in the sample. It indicates a change in the pattern of occupations of Bhantus from those of the earlier phases.

Table 3.7 shows the contrast between the occupational engagements of Bhantu men and women. It was found that among men, there is a tendency to get engaged in occupations in organized sectors while women have a tendency to work in the informal sectors and in occupations which are labelled as 'unlawful' by the government

TABLE : 3.7

OCCUPATIONAL STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Nature of Occupation	Men Freq. (%)	Women Freq. (%)	Total
(i) Secular Occupations			
Government job	75 (68.2)	03 (02.4)	78 (33.2)
Self-employment	10 (09.1)	01 (0.8)	11 (04.7)
Garment factory	03 (02.7)	11 (08.8)	14 (06.0)
Informal Sector	07 (06.4)	02 (01.6)	09 (03.8)
(ii) Unlawful income generating activities			
Gambling	01 (0.9)	01 (0.8)	02 (0.9)
Theft/Shutter-lifting	03 (02.7)	02 (01.6)	05 (02.1)
Liquor making	06 (05.5)	30 (24.0)	36 (15.3)
Prostitution	-	12 (09.6)	12 (05.1)
Begging	-	01 (0.8)	01 (0.4)
(iii) Housekeeping	-	62 (49.6)	62 (26.4)
(iv) Unemployed	05 (04.5)	-	05 (02.1)
Total	110 (100.0)	125 (100.0)	235 (100.0)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses are percentages.

The occupations can be broadly classified in the three groups: (i) Secular (ii) unlawful; and (iii) housekeeping. The

secular and `unlawful' occupations are further classified into several activities.

(i) Secular Occupations

The secular occupations constitute employment in government sector, self-employment, tailoring in garment factory and informal sector.

(a) Government jobs

The total percentage of Bhantus employed in government organizations is 33.2%. Most of the Bhantu men are engaged in central or state government jobs. The majority of those working in government organizations are employed at the lower levels like clerks, peons etc. They attached high prestige to these jobs because of the regular income and security that these jobs provide. Some of the government jobs are transferable. If a person is transferred to some other place he leaves behind his wife and children in the Basti. In the sample 68.2% men and 2.4% women are employed in government jobs.

(b) Self-employment

Under various self-employment schemes, the government has provided financial assistance to Bhantus for starting petty business. The data show that 4.7% of Bhantus have started their own business like, cycle repairing, private tailoring shop, betel shop, welding shop etc. The discussion with some of these reveal that they earn a relatively decent income. Though these jobs are considered to be respectable, the involvement of men and women of the Bhantu community in these jobs is very less (9.1% of men as against 0.8% of Bhantu women). Most of the beneficiaries

of government self-employment schemes have rented their shops out. Only very few of them have really utilized the facility.

(c) Employment in Garment Factory

As mentioned earlier, the colonial government established a a garment factory in the premises of the settlement to provide employment to the Bhantus. The garment factory continued to operate after denotification. It was controlled by the state agency. The wages paid to the workers who form 6.0% of total respondents are based on piece-rate, i.e. the wages are paid in terms of number of pieces of clothing made by a worker. In this sense it is different from government jobs in which employees are paid monthly salaries. Further the garment factory management imposes fines on workers turning out bad work. Although it is not a job fully based on mental skills, the workers, especially women workers, feel that garment making is a skilled job and hence more respectable compared to wage labour. The proportion of men engaged in this occupation is almost negligible (2.7%) while 8.0% of the women are employed in garment factory as tailors. When the respondents were asked as to why men are not interested in taking up tailoring as a regular job, one of them commented that:

> **"Ish Naukari mein paisa kam hai aur permanent nahein hai, sirf aurthon ke liya acchhi hai." (This job is less paying, irregular and suitable only for women).**

Men of the community prefer high paying, regular and government jobs or business. Prior to settlement this notion of femininity of certain occupations was restricted to certain unlawful occupations. After the settlement the perception of Bhantus regarding the choice of jobs changed and led to making a distinction between manly and womanly work. It is possible that

this perception is guided by the definitions of 'outsiders'. Interestingly, though work in the garment factory is less paying and irregular, it is considered respectable among the Bhantus.

(d) Employment in Informal Sectors

Occupations in informal sector consist of activities such as services and construction work. In the study it has been found that the main activities are rickshaw pulling, construction and domestic work. The respondents who form 3.8% of the workforce often engaged in these occupations complained of the excessive workload, low wages and less respect they receive from their employers. In the sample 6.4% of Bhantu men are engaged in informal sector jobs like rickshaw pulling and casual labour, while only 1.6% women in the sample are engaged in casual labour like working as maid servants.

(ii) 'Unlawful' Income Generating Activities

These are socially and legally 'disapproved' occupations. Prior to the settlement of the Bhantus, these activities were carried out in an organized way by the whole community for livelihood. Now these activities are performed individually or by a small group in the community. In the study, a few respondents mentioned economic compulsion as the reason for their involvement in such activities. As mentioned earlier, the members of the community aspire for higher standard of living like, possession of television set, fridge, scooter etc. They spend a good part of their hard earned money either on buying luxury items or on entertainment. They look for avenues of earning higher income. If a few of them are short of money they will not hesitate in trying to earn through 'disapproved' sources as

these were considered 'legitimate' by their community in the recent past. A section of Bhantus continue to assert that they are legitimate even now. The following unlawful activities are found to be common in the community.

(a) Gambling

In their leisure, Bhantu men and women are fond of playing cards. They will sit on a cot surrounded by other men, women and children of the community during day time but at nights they gamble with 'outsiders'. The 'outsiders' are hesitant about visiting the 'Basti' in broad day light to avoid loss of social honour. The Bhantus do not hesitate in taking a large sum of money as loan for the purpose of gambling. Though this activity is a good source of income for Bhantus, only one man (0.9%) and a woman (0.8%) in the sample are involved in gambling as a full time activity.

(b) Theft/Shutter-lifting

This occupation appears to be rather common among the Bhantus ever since the pre-settled phase. The 2.1% Bhantu men and women involved in this activity go out of the Basti to remote parts of the city for such activity. According to them, the members of community residing in other settlements of the country help them pursue this occupation. Further, it appears that the local police also gives them full protection in carrying out this activity with the understanding that the Bhantus would share the loot. In case the police or the members of the community involved in thefts are not satisfied with the shares given to them they leak the information and then the theft comes to public notice. In the sample, 2.7% of the men and 1.6% of women reported that they are engaged in this kind of occupation.

(c) Liquor-making

It is considered as the most 'respectable' traditional occupation among the Bhantus. The 15.3% of Bhantus are engaged in this occupation. Generally women are involved in liquor-making. They distill liquor during day time and with the help of their children sell the bottles of wine to their customers who are generally 'outsiders'. In the sample, 5.5% of men as against 24.0% of women are engaged in this occupation.

(d) Prostitution

It is also an income generating activity among 5.1% of Bhantu respondents. During the pre-settlement phase, women were engaged in this profession in the interest of the whole community. Now economic compulsions force them into prostitution. Some women go to cities like Bombay and Calcutta with the help of brokers, to earn substantial amount of money in a few months time. If a woman has a child, she leaves the child with relatives before going. A few of them find the 'Basti' a suitable place for this purpose because they not only get social protection but can also look after their families. Those engaged in this occupation complain about their low income and ill-treatment by the customers and the police. In the sample 9.6 per cent of the women are engaged in this profession.

(e) Begging

It is not a common occupational activity. Only 0.4% of members are engaged in this activity. Earlier it was used as a cover to assess the financial position of potential victims of theft. Before their settlement it was done in the interest of

the whole community but now it is done to overcome the financial crisis of individuals. Only a single respondent, that too a woman (i.e. 0.8%) reported that begging is her full time occupation.

It is evident from the data that a greater number of working women among Bhantus are engaged in so called 'unlawful' occupations. Out of 50.4% of working women, 36.8% are involved in various types of 'unlawful' activities like gambling, theft/shutterlifting, liquor-making, prostitution and begging. Out of 95.4% working men only 9.5% are engaged in occupations like gambling, theft/shutterlifting and liquor-making. It is clear that although the women are engaged in work, their work tends to be 'less respectable' not only in the eyes of the outsiders, but also among a section of their own community members. There is a tendency on the part of the Bhantu men, to encourage their women to get involved in risky, uncertain and socially 'degraded' occupations. In fact, in few cases, Bhantu men sometimes persuade their spouses to earn through these 'unlawful' activities. In a few cases however, it has been observed that women who are housewives, occasionally earn money through these activities against the wishes of their husbands. Since many Bhantu men are engaged in secular occupations, they do not take up these occupations for the fear of losing their 'respectability' and jobs.

Moreover, quite a few men and women feel that the law enforcing authorities will be lenient to women who are engaged in such occupations. That is why more women tend to take up such jobs. It appears that women engage themselves in these occupations because of economic compulsions. In some cases it is to acquire common durables while in others it is because the man in the household does not earn enough. According to one of the

women respondents, the government is not offering them respectable jobs, and further:

> "Jab ghar mein khane ko nahein hoga aour sarkaar hume naukari nahein degi to hum log isi tarah ke 'Dhande' kareinge". (When there will be no food at home, and the government will not give us jobs, obviously we will go for such professions).

When they were told that there are other groups, and women in the Indian society who, even if they starve, will not take up these jobs, one of them retaliated at once:

> "Arye unlogo ko log chor, ucchakka aur badmash bhi to nahein kahate". (People then don't also call them notorious, shutterlifters and thieves).

This statement reveals that labelling is playing a crucial part in reinforcing the stereotyped image held by 'others'. In fact, one may say that the degree of stigmatization also depends on occupational activities among Bhantus. This shows that a section of the Bhantus tend to live upto the stereotyped image held by others.

(iii) Housekeeping

The Bhantu women's involvement in housekeeping activity in the post denotification phase shows a significant change in their occupational profile. The data show that 49.6% of women respondents are housewives and are exclusively involved in household chores.

According to the Bhantus, earlier, the women did not lead a sedantary life of housewives as they do now. But today being a housewife is a reflection of overall economic prosperity of the

family. One of the respondents commented:

> **"Jab humare husbands accha kamate hein to hum kisi aur ki gulami kiyon karein, acche ghar ki auratein aap longo ki society mein bahar kaam karne nahin jati hein." (When our husbands are earning well, why should we go and serve others. Women of good families in the researcher's society do not go out to work.).**

Generally, Bhantu women consider the status of a housewife 'ideal' for themselves. It has been mentioned earlier that the conception of the role of housewife among Bhantus is akin to that of upper caste, middle class groups in India. Interestingly, a few Bhantu housewives expressed a desire to work because the income of their husbands is not adequate to realize such aspirations as sending their children to convent schools, owning houses, consumer durables etc. But, by and large, Bhantu women who are housewives, tend to stick to the concept of 'separate spheres' of work. They try to conform to the life style of 'outsiders' by adopting their way of life. A few of the women respondents of this group sometimes face dilemma while making a choice between conforming to the outsiders' values on the one hand and conforming to their own traditional values, occupations and life styles on the other. However, in the face of resistance from 'outsiders' who would continue to perpetuate the stereotyped image of the Bhantus, they tend to compromise by occasionally returning to their traditional activities.

(iv) Unemployed

The total percentage of unemployed is 2.1% in the sample. It was found that 4.5% of men respondents are unemployed. None of the women conceded herself as unemployed. The reasons stated for men not getting employment were lack of educational qualifications to get government jobs, scarcity of jobs, strong competition and their 'criminal past'.

8. Income among Bhantus

The Bhantu households in the sample are divided into three groups on the basis of their income (see Table 3.8): (a) households with income upto Rs.2000/- per month; (b) households with income of between Rs.2001 - 4000 per month; and (c) households with income of Rs.4001/- and above per month. The total family income ranges from a minimum of Rs.1000/- per month to maximum of Rs.8000/- per month with a mean income of Rs.2,368 per month. The total income of the household includes income from all sources and income of all earners in the household.

The majority (65.6%) of the households are in the first income group (upto Rs.2000/- per month). A significant proportion of households (28.8%) have income between Rs.2001 - 4000/- per month. Only 5.6% households fall in the last income group, i.e. Rs.4000 and above per month.

Since the total income includes the income from all sources, the respondents were somewhat secretive about disclosing their sources. When enquired later, they revealed the income generating sources like farming and agricultural land once allotted to their families by the British administration. Some of them have even built houses outside the settlement and rented them to others. The Bhantus do not stay in their houses built outside the settlement because they prefer to live among the people of their own community and that too in a rent-free houses, allotted to them in the Basti. It was also noticed that there was some misreporting in the household income.

TABLE: 3.8

INCOME PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS AND THE TOTAL INCOME OF HOUSEHOLD

Income Level (Rs./ pm)	Total income of the Household		Men		Women	
	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
upto 2000	82	(65.6)	102	(97.1)	63	(50.4)
2001-4000	36	(28.8)	02	(01.9)	-	-
4000 +	07	(05.6)	01	(01.0)	-	-
TOTAL	125	(100.0)	105	(100.0)	125	(100.0)
Average income	2368		1158.85		534.30	
Minimum	1000		100.00		50.00	
Maximum	8000		5000.00		1500.00	

Note: 1. Figures in parentheses are percentage.

2. Five men respondents were unemployed.

When asked for the reasons of misreporting, one of the respondents stated:

> **"Aapko kya bastiwalo ki suvidhayein band karaani hai? Agar humlongo ki aamdani ka lekha jokha sarkar ke paas pahunch gaya to hum logo ki suvidhayein to kum kar de jayengi." (Do you want to stop the privileges of the Basti people? If the government gets the exact record of our family income, they will stop our privileges).**

The data further bring out the sex differentials in the income levels. The average monthly income of Bhantu working women is Rs.534.30 as against the average monthly income of Bhantu men which is Rs.1158.85. The income of Bhantu working women ranges from Rs.50 to 1500 per month and in the case of men from Rs.100 to 5000 per month.

The reason for this significant difference in the income level of Bhantu men and women is the involvement of women in uncertain, irregular and part-time occupations which are also considered 'low paying', 'disrespectful', 'discrediting' by the 'outsiders'. After finishing household chores, women distill liquor and sell the same in the evening to the customers who visit them. Liquor-making is a risky occupation with no fixed income. Though a few of them have adopted prostitution as a regular job, the income from this occupation is not fixed and varies depending on the paying capacity and the liking of customers. In addition, it leads to several health problems like sexually transmitted diseases. Similarly, theft/shutter-lifting or gambling are neither regular nor fixed income-generating occupations. Working as tailor at a private shop is remunerative but working in a government owned garment factory, at the Basti, is not attractive because of very low wages. It appears that the piece rates for various garments have not been revised since a long time. The supervisors at the garment making unit levy penalties on Bhantu women for minor lapses in their work and deduct these penalties from the wages. The work in the factory is not regular because of (a) lack of adequate number of government orders for uniforms; (b) lack of regular supply of clothing material; (c) several sewing machines being out of order (out of 250 sewing machines, hardly 50 machines were in working condition); and (d) corruption among officials who run the garment unit.

To see the nature of relationship between the total income of the households and the size of the Bhantu households, a cross-tabulation of household size with household income was carried out. Table 3.9 shows that among eighty-two households,

TABLE : 3.9

MONTHLY INCOME WITH HOUSEHOLD SIZE OF BHANTUS

Total monthly income of a household	Household size			Total
	2-5 members	6-8 members	9 and above	
Upto Rs.2000	21 (25.6)	50 (61.0)	11 (13.4)	82 (100.0)
Above Rs.2001-4000	4 (11.1)	9 (25.0)	23 (63.9)	36 (100.0)
Rs.4001 and above	-	1 (14.3)	6 (85.7)	7 (100.0)
Total	25 20.0	60 48.0	40 32.0	125 100.0

Note: 1. Figures in parentheses are percentage.

2. Income of the other earners of a household is added to the total income.

which fall in the income group of Rs.2000 and less per month, the majority i.e. fifty households have six to eight members; twenty one have two to five members and only eleven households have over nine members. It shows that the low income Bhantu households have a relatively large number of dependents rather than earners. Among thirty six households which fall in the income group ranging from above Rs.2001 to 4000 per month, we find that the majority (i.e. 23) of the households have over nine persons; nine households have between six to eight persons. In the case of households having income over Rs.4000 per month there are only six households having over nine persons.

It is quite possible that there are more earners in these households, because one of the Bhantu respondents reported that

people of their community have not only understated their household income, as mentioned earlier, but also the number of earners. He estimated that 80% of the Bhantus are economically well off. The data, however, show that the majority of the households (i.e. 82) have income upto Rs.2000 per month. Given the relatively large average size of the household it may be said that the majority of the Bhantu households have low income in relation to the size of the household.

3.3 An Overview

It is clear from the above description of Bhantus' socio-economic life that the British Government's policies negatively affected the overall development of the Bhantus. Its effects are noticeable even today as the data on current socio-demographic profile of households show. On one hand a significant change in their educational achievements and general economic condition is noticed. On the other hand, one observes a tendency among Bhantus to regress into their traditional mode of earning livelihood.

Further, residential segregation of the Bhantus during colonial phase not only reinforced cultural boundaries but also drew physical boundaries between Bhantus and the local castes and classes. This implies that the Bhantus got conditioned to the stigmatized position and tried to behave in accordance with the expectations of 'outsiders'. The culture of other social groups and their bureaucratic setup highly influenced worldview, values and 'gendered world' of Bhantus. Earlier during pre-settlement phase, the concept of 'separate-spheres' was almost absent but after settlement one sees changes in the perspectives of Bhantu men and women.

However, in spite of the denotification and constitutional provisions and consequent participation of Bhantus in education and secular occupations, the stigma mediates their interaction with 'outsiders'. The Bhantus have been attempting to redefine their status through negotiation. The next two chapters deal with this dimension by understanding the patterns of interaction in intra- and inter-group interaction situations.

CHAPTER IV

LABELLING AND STATUS OF BHANTUS IN INTRA-GROUP INTERACTION SITUATION

The preceding chapter discusses the social background and current socio-economic and demographic profile of Bhantu community in Kanpur. The analysis of findings indicate a distinct change, over a period of time, in the nature of gender and stigma attributions pertaining to Bhantus. Furthermore, the analysis of certain objective indicators show that there exist clear-cut status differentials in the Bhantu settlement under study.

The present chapter focuses on the subjective dimension of social differentiation among Bhantus. An attempt has been made to analyse and understand Bhantus' subjective interpretations of gender and stigma labels and their impact on social positions in intra-group interaction situation. Section 4.1 describes the nature of intra-group interaction among Bhantus. The type of gender and stigma labels and subjective meanings attached to them are analysed in section 4.2. The impact of meanings attached to different labels on social status in intra-group interaction situation is analysed on the basis of Bhantus' own accounts in section 4.3. Finally, section 4.4 presents an overview of the chapter.

4.1 Bhantus' Interaction in Intra-Group Situation

The situation of an individual or groups may refer to several socio-cultural domains specific to them. Accordingly,

the nature of interaction patterns are also varied among group members. Nonetheless, it is possible for the sake of analysis, to identify one single focus of situated activity in the social life of a group.

For Bhantus, as mentioned in the introductory chapter itself, the most important single focus of social life has been the concern with material pursuits irrespective of the means employed. The data on social background and current profile confirm that Bhantus' social life is dominated by their varied income earning activities.

The analytical focus of the present section therefore is on Bhantus' occupational involvements and social consequences thereof.

The occupational opportunities created after denotification have transformed the intra-group social life among Bhantus very significantly. It is observed that involvement in secular occupations like, employment in government departments, self-owned businesses skilled and unskilled jobs in factories etc., are considered as sources of social prestige and material prosperity by majority of respondents. On the other hand, voluntary involvement in unlawful activities like theft, dacoity and prostitution is considered as socially denigrating within the community unlike in the past. Yet, paradoxically, it is found that in quite a few households members adopt both types of occupations without the fear of social humiliation. In fact, it is often difficult to make out from Bhantus' responses as to what are their actual occupational preferences.

One can also see a feeling of solidarity and cooperation among Bhantus irrespective of the nature of their occupational engagements. This is most prominently reflected during times of

'crises'. For instance, during a police raid in the settlement, it is observed that members of the community withhold identity of those who are pursuing 'criminal' activities. The help rendered is mostly in the form of keeping a vigil on police personnel, handling rowdy customers, and arranging hide-outs. The central feature of such supportive actions is the concern for safety of community members involved in unlawful income generating activities. The 'criminals' in the community, in their turn help economically weak members in meeting certain pressing needs such as education of children, marriage of daughters, starting petty business etc.

A deeper probing into the nature of intra-group interaction however reveals the absence of a uniform pattern. There are intra-community conflicts which are not voiced in the presence of an outsider. The researcher as an outsider had to make gradual inroads into the community's inner emotional recesses. On being asked about the nature of interaction with community's men and women, respondents reacted very differently. It is possible though, to categorise their responses about intra-group interaction in terms of cordial, moderately cordial and less cordial.

Table 4.1.A and 4.1.B show responses of Bhantu men and women respectively. It is clear from their responses that nature of their occupational involvement influences their interactions with members of the community. Therefore, responses about intra-group interaction are cross-tabulated with employment status of respondents.

In the case of Bhantu men (Table 4.1.A), it is found that majority of them (54.5%) reported their intra-group interaction as cordial. In terms of their employment status, they are by and large involved in secular occupations like government service

(48.2%), self employment (1.8%), garment factory work (0.9%) and work in the informal sector (1.8%). A very few (1.8%) of them are involved in unlawful activities but given the opportunity, would like to leave these activities. Almost all men who maintain cordial interaction with members of the community reacted to the researcher's question in the following way:

> **"Our people consider us respectable (Sharif), honest (imandaar) and hard working (mehanti). Irrespective of the nature of occupation and internal fights we share good and bad moments together. We discourage communityfolk involved in illegal works like shutter-lifting, gambling etc."**

The moderately cordial intra-group interaction was reported by those Bhantu men who are involvled in secular income-earning activities but do not object to their kins' involvement in 'unlawful' activities. They constitute 33.7% of the total male respondents. When classified in terms of their employment status, it is found that all of them are employed in secular occupations like government service (20.0%), self-employment (7.3%), work in garment factory (1.8%) and informal sector (4.6%). Some of them reacted in the following manner in response to the researcher's question:

> **"Though some of our relatives are involved in traditional occupations, people of the community understand our helplessness (majboori). They are, however, less cooperative."**

The Bhantu men who reported less cordial interaction within the community are only 11.8 per cent. They are either involved in unlawful activities (7.3%) or are unemployed (4.5%). Their reaction to the researcher's question is summarised below:

"As some of us are involved in ill-reputed jobs (galat-dhande), communityfolk particularly those in government service (sarkari naukar) are not open during interaction. They maintain formal relations and often deplore us as shutter-lifters (shutter baaz), gamblers (juaari), malingerers (kaamchor) and drunkards (darubaaz). Let me tell you that theft and gambling in the Basti is not an anti-social activity."

TABLE 4.1.A

NATURE OF INTRA-GROUP INTERACTION REPORTED BY BHANTU MEN

(N = 110)

Responses of the Bhantu men on nature of intra-group interaction	Respondent's Employment Status						
	Govt. servant	Self employed	Garment factory worker	Worker in Informal Sector	Engaged in 'unlawful' income generating activities	Unem-ployed	Total
Cordial Interaction	53 (48.2)	02 (01.8)	01 (0.9)	02 (01.8)	02 (01.8)	--	60 (54.5)
Moderately Cordial Interaction	22 (20.0)	08 (07.3)	02 (01.8)	05 (04.6)	--	--	37 (33.7)
Less Cordial Interaction	--	--	--	--	08 (07.3)	05 (04.5)	13 (11.8)

NOTE: The figures in parentheses represent percentage of total number of male respondents.

The Bhantu women are more forthcoming when asked about their intra-group interactions by the researcher. Table 4.1.B shows the pattern of their responses along with their employment status. The section of the Bhantu women who reported cordial interaction within the community is largest (41.6%). The majority (33.6%) of such women are involved in house-keeping

activities and rest of them are in secular occupations like, government service (2.4%), self-employment (0.8%), work in garment factory (4.0%) and informal sector (0.8%). The responses of this category of Bhantu women is summed up in the following excerpt:

> **"The community people give us respect. They consider us well-behaved (tameezdaar) and delicate (naazuk)."**

TABLE : 4.1.B

NATURE OF INTRA-GROUP INTERACTION REPORTED BY BHANTU WOMEN

(N = 125)

Responses of Bhantu women on nature of intra-group interaction	Respondent's Employment Status							
	Govt. servant	Self employed	Garment factory worker	Worker in Informal Sector	Engaged in 'unlawful' income generating activities	House-keeping	Unem-ployed	Total
Cordial Interaction	03 (02.4)	01 (0.8)	05 (04.0)	1 (0.8)	--	42 (33.6)	--	52 (41.6)
Moderately Cordial Interaction	--	--	06 (04.8)	01 (0.8)	09 (07.2)	20 (16.0)	--	36 (28.8)
Less Cordial Interaction	--	--	--	--	37 (29.6)	--	--	37 (29.6)

NOTE: The figures in parentheses represent percentage of total number of female respondents.

There is another section of Bhantu women (28.8%) who reported moderately cordial interaction with members of the community. One of them commented:

> **"Inspite of our family members' involvement in ill-reputed jobs (galat-dhande), the people of our community consider us poor Things (bechari)! A few of**

them provide help when required. Sometimes, they cooperate in our activities."

It is apparent that unlawful activities are carried out in their households even though the female respondents themselvles may not be associated with such activities. In fact, it is noticed that quite a few of them are involved in only house-keeping activities (16.0%). Some of these Bhantu women work in garment factory (4.8%) and in informal sector (0.8%). A few of them are also engaged in unlawful activities (7.2%). But their interaction with the communityfolk is not restricted because they are considered as helpless by the rest.

The less cordial interaction, on the other hand, is reported by those Bhantu women who are exclusively involved in unlawful activites (29.6%) like prostitution and liquor-making. On being asked about their interaction with other community members, one of them said:

"The people within the community admire us for being courageous (diler), strong (damdaar) and mannish (mard) in nature. A few of them address us as fiery (aag), what a piece! (maal) and care-free (bindaas). But, quite a few of them especially government servants (sarkari naukar) and their madams (memsahibs) are arrogant. They are very reserved in their interaction with us."

Thus, inspite of the praise these women get from the community for possessing certain traits congruent with traditional 'feminine' qualities, their interaction remains restricted within the community.

The categorisation of these relationships as cordial, moderately cordial and less cordial show the 'rules of irrelevance' during mutual interactions. The nature of interaction between respondents is crucially guided by their notions of "sanctioned orderliness". Their subjective

preferences in the interaction situation are influenced by their definitions of occupational involvements. Thus in the case of Bhantus, occupational pursuits are most important factors in deciding the degree of mutual cordiality.

Those Bhantu men and women who consider their interactions within the community as cordial, obviously see themselves as positively evaluated by others. The Bhantu respondents who reported their intra-group interactions as less cordial display certain amount of anxiety about their position in the group. Finally, those who consider their intra-group interactions as moderately cordial are probably trying to redefine their intra-group situation and appear to be in a state of transition.

The complex nature of intra-group differentiation and control is analysed in next two sections in terms of meanings of labels used during interaction and locally generated status categories.

4.2 Meaning of Gender and Stigma Labels and Status Categories

The intra-group interaction patterns among Bhantus have direct bearing on the type of labels used by them for expressing mutual evaluations. The face-to-face instances of status positions are also reflected in various labels used during intra-group interactions. The interpretative understanding of the meanings attached to various labels by Bhantus clearly brings out the prevailing pattern of social differentiation within the group.

Table 4.2 shows different labels used for the three categories of male and female Bhantu respondents. These labels are referred to by respondents themselves during the course of conversation with the researcher

TABLE 4.2

TYPE OF LABELS USED BY RESPONDENTS DURING INTRA-GROUP INTERACTION

Category of Respondents	Labels Denoting Gender-Bias		Labels Denoting Disapproval of Certain Behaviour	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Respondents Maintaining Cordial Interaction	Sharif Imandaar Mehanti	Tameezdaar Nazuk	Shutterbaaz Kaamchor Juaari	--
Respondents Maintaining Moderately Cordial Interaction	Majboor	Bechari	--	--
Respondents Maintaining Less Cordial Interaction	Shutterbaaz Juanri Darubaaz	Diler Damdaar Mard Aag Maal Bindaas	--	Memsahib

NOTE: Refer Appendix C for Glossary of dialect used by Bhantus

The above table shows frequent use of gender-specific attributes in mutual evaluations by respondents. As mentioned in Chapter I, the gender-specific designations refer to meanings and conceptions of what is 'essential' to denote characteristics of maleness and femaleness. It may be noticed in Table 4.2 that male and female respondents in each category use different labels. These labels denote their gender-bias in mutual evaluations. The labelling of the stigma of criminality, however, is not very pronounced in intra-group interactions among Bhantu men and women. But, involvement in crime is disapproved by a section of male respondents.

The specific meaning of each label and associated notions of honour, prestige and disapproval are discussed below. The labels used for men are defined first followed by labels for women.

(i) Darubaaz

The label 'darubaaz' is used for a Bhantu man who is drunkard but accepted as a normal member of the community.

(ii) Imaandaar

The term is used for those Bhantu men who are engaged in secular occupations and are relied upon by communityfolk in adverse circumstances.

(iii) Juaari

The Bhantu men who make their living by large-scale organised gambling are referred to as juaari. This is an undesirable occupation and disapproved actively within the community. Interestingly, the women members of the community are praised for their involvement in gambling.

(iv) Kaamchor

This term is exclusively used for those men who live off on their spouses' earnings and do not prefer to work for making a living. They are socially humiliated for their idleness.

(v) Majboor

This term is used for such Bhantu men who are not able to prevent their family members' involvement in 'unlawful' activities. They are given sympathy by those members of the community who persue secular occupations

(vi) Mehanti

This label is used for such Bhantu men who make their living by manual work and yet do not take part in 'unlawful' income generating activities. They are appreciated for their efforts by communityfolk.

(vii) Sharif

This label is used for such Bhantu men who are government servants and want to change negative image of Bhantu community. The label denotes a feeling of respect for the men concerned and shows their honourable position within the community.

(viii) Shutterbaaz

Bhantu men who earn their living by theft are called Shutterbaaz. Such men are criticised within the community.

(ix) Aag

This label is used for sexually attractive Bhantu women. It is regarded as a positive trait of a young woman in the Bhantu community. It is noticed that such women are involved in prostitution which is negatively evaluated by a section of Bhantus.

(x) Bechari

A women pursuing 'unlawful' income generating activites either due to financial hardship or tension in marital relations is referred to as bechari. Such women get cooperation from communityfolk.

(xi) Bindaas

A women who is easily approachable for casual sexual relationship by outsiders is referred to as bindaas within the community. Their behaviour is not negatively evaluated but some members of the community maintain distance from such women.

(xii) Damdaar

This label is used for such women who are involved in liquor-making and thefts. They are admired for their skills in handling 'disturbing' agents who include their spouses, outside customers and police personnel. They are honoured within the community.

(xiii) Diler

This label is used for those Bhantu women who are not afraid to take risks in material pursuits. They are mostly involved in unlawful activities like theft, gambling and selling of country liquor. They are admired within the community.

(xiv) Maal

A Bhantu woman who is extremely beautiful and charming is referred as Maal. Such women use their charm to dupe outsiders for material gains. They are appreciated by communityfolk for their skills.

(xv) Mard

The Bhantu women who take crucial decision in family matters are referred to as Mard. They are positively evaluated for their assertiveness.

(xvi) Memsahib

The Bhantu women exclusively involved in house-keeping activities are sarcastically referred as memsahibs. They maintain distance from those women who are involved in various unlawful activities.

(xvii) Naazuk

This is a label for such Bhantu women who take care of their family members and are not involved in any income generating activity.

(xviii) Tameezdaar

This label is exclusively used for such Bhantu women who either pursue secular occupations or are housewives. They are polite and well-behaved towards communityfolk as well as outsiders.

The meaning of various labels as discussed above highlight three instances of status patterns in intra-group interaction situation of Bhantus. These are: challengers, conformists and compromisers.

The next section analyses the accounts of Bhantu men and women placed in these categories.

4.3 Analysis of Intra-Group Status Positions

The three status patterns, identified on the basis of meanings attached to different labels used in intra-group interactions, reflect a structure of differentiation and control in the Bhantu community. Each of these status categories may be analysed and understood in terms of social actors' boundaries of behaviour; relative domination and subordination; and group alignments. In what follows, the subjective accounts of

respondents categorised as challengers, conformists and compromisers are analysed in terms of these constantly defined, negotiated and redefined aspects of social positions.

4.3.1. The Challengers:

The challengers among Bhantus are those men who are labelled as respectable (sharif), honest (imaandaar) and hardworking (mehanti). The women in this category are labelled as well-behaved (tameezdar) and delicate (naazuk). The use of these labels in intra-group interactions among Bhantus is a fairly recent phenomenon. The positive meanings of sharif, imaandaar, tameezdar etc. highlight the social significance attached to men's involvement in secular occupations and women's role as housewives. The emergence of separate spheres of work implied by the use of aforesaid labels is not congruent with traditional values and practices of Bhantu society. The nature of labelling and the social context of their use show the perceptible changes that are taking place amongst Bhantu due to a more active interaction with outsiders.

Incidentally, the same set of labels are used by those respondents who report the nature of their intra-group interaction as cordial. Thus, it may be deduced that challengers, both men and women, tend to have cordial interaction with their communityfolk. As a homogeneous section of all Bhantu respondents these men and women constitute the largest sub-group (47.6%) in the community.

The challengers are not hostile to Bhantu culture as such, but would like to make efforts so that the negative image of the community is altered. This accounts for their disapproval towards activities like shutter-lifting, gambling and idleness.

Interestingly, they do not directly criticise activities of women members involved in socially undesirable professions like prostitution, liquor-making etc. They simply avoid social contact with them. The complex nature of responses even on the part of those seen as visible challengers, can be illustrated better by a first person account.

The man is employed as cashier in a nationalised Bank and lives in the settlement with his wife and three small children. He expressed his views as follows:

> "We have been living in the settlement because this place belongs to our ancestors. Not many inhabitants are bad. In fact, considerable number of respectable (sarif) and honest (imaandaar) people reside here. Look at my family! My wife not only stays at home but also manages the home and takes care of children. The salary which I get is sufficient for our needs. My wife and children comply with my wishes. ....I would like my sons to study and seek employment in some government office. Such an employment is good for both family and the community. For example, if somebody in the settlement is in trouble or say, needs a loan from the bank, he seeks my help and advice. The people in the settlement (basti) respect government employees like me. I will fix marriages of my sons and daughter only in respectable (sharif) families."

A Bhantu housewife spoke in the following manner:

> "I came to this settlement after my marriage. My father is a railway employee. Before marriage I used to stay in the official quarter along with my mother and two elder brothers who were in school. My father allowed me to study only upto tenth standard. After that they fixed my marriage because they believe that girls of good families ought to look after their husband and children. My husband is a government employee and is respected by members of the community. The people in the settlement regard me as a civilized and well-behaved woman because I am married to a government servant. However, a few women engaged in bad activities sometimes sarcastically address me as Madam (Memsahib) because I do not mix around with them. I would like them to change themselves and become respectable (izzatdaar) like me".

The accounts show a tendency among Bhantu challengers to question traditional ways of living. The man, for example,

comments, "not many inhabitants are bad. In fact, considerable number of respectable and honest people reside here". The woman confides in a similar vein. She says, "the people in the settlement regard me as a civilized and well-behaved woman because I am married to a government servant."

These two statements indicate an approval for newly emerging work norms in the Bhantu society. To this extent, the boundaries of social behaviour of challengers have become flexible and permeable because of their association with socially respectable occupations. The respondents are assimilating the social norms of outsiders and evolving new definitions of mehanti, imaandar, memsaahib, naazuk and izaatdaar. There are, however, gender differences as is clear from clearly defined roles for men and women. 'Maleness' is defined in terms of earning income from honest and respectable means while 'femaleness' is seen in terms of involvement in house-keeping activities. This signifies the acceptance of urban middle class and upper caste definitions of gender roles. As a result, the women among challengers enjoy less freedom as compared to men. The norms of social conduct in the case of women are determined by their husbands' employment status.

The domination and subordination pattern among challenger further reflects gender bias. The relative life chances of men and women vary. The men dominate in family as well as community. They take vital decisions in the family like education of children, arranging daughters' marriages etc. In the community affairs, they act as advisors and are in a position to offer help to needy members of the community. The women, on the other hand, remain subordinate to their menfolk. This subordination is clear

from statements like, "My father allowed me to study only upto tenth standard," and "I came to the settlement after marriage." The man says, "My wife and children comply with my wishes" and "I would like my sons to study and seek employment in same government office."

The group alignment pattern and expression of identities among challengers show an element of exclusivity. The subjective sense of superiority helps them in forming a coterie of elites within the community. For example, the man wishes, "I will fix marriages of my sons and daughter in respectable (sharif) families," and the woman says "I would like them (women engaged in illegal occupations) to become respectable (izzatdaar) like me."

4.3.2. The Conformists

In the total sample 21.3% of Bhantu men and women respondents are conformists. They are those men and women who reported less cordial interaction within the community and have a tendency to justify their involvement in 'unlawful' occupations by narrating stories of folk heroes who were legendary criminals and who fought for cultural identity. The designations used for men in this status category are shutterbaaz, juaari and darubaaz. The women in this category are labelled as diler, damdaar, mard, aag, maal and bindaas. The meanings of these labels are congruent with traditional Bhantu values and practices. Since men and women who are referred to by aforesaid labels do not resist the use of such designations, they are categorised as conformists. The nature of conformity is more specifically seen in their attitude towards the occupations chosen by them. Being a shop lifter (shutterbaaz) is not

These two accounts illustrate the most crucial aspects of interaction order amongst conformists in Bhantu community. The excerpts from interviews highlight the self perception of conformists who flout artificially assimilated norms of 'respectability' accepted by challengers. Also, and possibly more siginificantly, these accounts are conveying the impact of interaction with outsiders and the responses of conformists to the denigrating value judgements of outsiders. Nevertheless, the basis for pursuing theft as an occupation is defended taking recourse to notions of 'cultural identity'. The underlying awareness of being an anti-social is hinted at, which shows the inevitable dynamics of a human situation fraught with notions of discrediting and discredited.

These notions acquire aggressive connotations in the case of women conformists. A Bhantu woman conformist is disgusted by the 'malingering' proclivities of her husband (a kaamchor) and in such a situation defends her choice of a traditional occupation - making and selling liquor. Still, the deeply embedded notion of a 'male' as one who is gallant is evident in her unfulfilled expectation of her husband and the alternative 'male' sources of help who can 'intimidate trouble makers'. In such a situation are perceived the merging together of complex responses to idealisation of notions of 'maleness'. The exigencies of her situation bring in her a defensive posture on being fearless (diler). The traditional notions of gallantry and courage are in this specific situation acquiring fluidly multiple dimensions of gender definitions.

The patterns of domination and subordination are influenced by the absence of division of work sphere in conformist men and women. A woman conformist engaged in the traditional occupation

of liquor making is by virtue of a gender specific label of 'fearless' (diler) able to maintain domination within the group. The woman takes pride in her status and reserves her right to take major decisions. "While all of them were singing praises of my fearlessness, my husband was lying stone-drunk in the house. When he gained consciousness, I asked him to leave the house immediately". The power to exert changes in one's condition with implicit support from the group are not available to male conformist. As a thief he sustains himself on legends but cannot procure a concrete infrastructural support from the group. "Many people in the settlement do not think that theft and gambling are respectable professions. They have branded me as a shutter-lifter". Such explicit disapproval is not evident for woman conformist which puts her in a relatively dominant position.

The group alignment pattern among conformists show that they mostly interact among themselves. This is clear from the woman's statement,"I have to take help of other people in the settlement who intimidate trouble makers like police men." The man comments, "Though this profession does not carry the old prestige, we have to carry it on for maintaining our cultural identity." The observational data show that conformists are accepted as 'normal' members of the community. Consequently, they do not manage information about their identity in intra-group interaction situations.

4.3.3. The Compromisers

The compromisers among Bhantus are those men and women who are labelled as majboor (helpless) and bechari (poor thing) respectively. The meanings of these labels indicate a sympathetic approach of community towards compromisers. They are

sympathised with because of their forced involvement in unlawful activities despite willingness to pursue secular occupations.

It is observed that men and women placed in this category maintain moderately cordial interaction with community. They constitute about 31.1 per cent of the total respondents. Most of them are sympathised with and cooperated at the time of need.

A factory foreman whose wife is involved in prostitution lamented:

> "Madam, when I joined service in the factory, my family members gave up their unlawful activities and began to lead a respectable life. In spite of my meagre income, we would manage all the expenses of our joint family. As my brothers also work, there was no such financial constraint. After I got married, my wife insisted that I separate from rest of the family members and stay in a nuclear family. I did not understand her intentions. After few months, she took to her earlier business of prostitution which is practiced at her parents' place. Initially, she did so very discretely. When I came to know about it, I strongly protested. On my repeated refusal to tolerate her activities, she got me thrashed by her customers. Finally, with the help of a police constable who happened to be a customer, she had me imprisoned. With the cooperation of some respectable people in the settlement, I was released from jail. In despair, I succumbed to excessive alcohol drinking. Now my wife has a very plausible excuse for continuing her illegal activities. She is enjoying herself thoroughly. People of my community sympathise with me, but cannot stop her activities since many other women are openly practising prostitution."

A house-wife who makes liquor because of the absence of any financial contribution from her husband to meet family needs, narrates the following:

> "Sister I am engaged in this profession because my husband,who happens to be a government servant,is involved with some other woman who lives outside the settlement. He spends all his income on her and hardly contributes anything towards meeting family expenditure. It is difficult for me to manage a family of five children. My children help me in marketing the liqour I make. It was not liked by my husband and he often used to prevent children from

helping me. Panchayat seeing my husband's behaviour, has given me protection. I am not legally divorced because my children will be deprived of fatherly affection which he bestows on them during his frequent visits to us."

The most important aspect of a compromiser's response is his/her pronounced distance from boundaries of a traditional occupation like prostitution and making liquor. The compromisers live with the labels of 'helpless' (majboor) and poor thing (bechari) to convey their own apathy towards the occupation and their status as victims. The labels acquire convoluted meanings because in one situation a man is helpless while in another situation he is banking on sympathy acquired as a victim. The woman compromiser does not reject the label of poor thing (bechari). The label signifies social support to the woman whose husband also by virtue of his chosen occupation is a challenger within the group.

The domination pattern as reflected in accounts of two compromisers show that women dominate in their interaction with menfolk. The label of 'poor things' in a social situation show a greater degree of sympathetic response from the group. This pattern of domination available to a woman compromiser is indicated by support given by the Panchayat. For a helpless male compromiser the reality of his situation does not lead to support from other members. This is a peculiar pattern of domination and subordination emerging out of complex motives in value based gender definitions.

The group alignment pattern is not very clear among compromisers. Most of the time, they try to establish cordial relationship with challengers as well as with conformists. They are, however, not loyal to any group. The ambiguity in the

expression of identity resists any simplified judgments about the compromisers overt aim to form small groups within the community.

4.4 An Overview

In this chapter, it has been shown that in the context of intra-group interaction situation, respondents occupational involvements determine their mutual evaluations and relationships. The meanings of labels, accordingly, reflect honour, prestige and disapproval. There is gender-specificity in the use of labels during interaction. The engagement in criminal activities is not regarded as a deeply discredited behaviour.

The intra-group labelling reflects and reproduces a peculiar structure of social differentiation and control in the Bhantu society. The impact of labelling is seen in generating three status groups among Bhantus. The challengers are elites in the group. The conformists are trying to retain their cultural identity through traditional occupations. The compromisers are trying to redefine their status under the influence of norms and values defined by challengers. It is evident from the accounts of respondents that gender labelling is more pronounced in intra-group interaction situation.

The significance of situational variations is highlighted by seeing the nature and impact of labelling in inter gorup interaction situation. The next chapter highlights the nature of gender and stigma labelling in inter- group interaction situation and its consequences for status categorisation.

LABELLING AND STATUS OF BHANTUS IN INTER-GROUP INTERACTION SITUATION

In this chapter, an attempt is made to analyze status positions of Bhantus in context of their interaction with 'outsiders'*. The aim is to show that labels used by outsiders not only characterize Bhantus but also show their relative status positions vis-a-vis outsiders. The meanings of gender and stigma labels and the corresponding impact on locally generated status categories are understood from Bhantus' accounts.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The focus of Section 5.1 is to understand Bhantus' interactions with the 'outsiders'. Section 5.2 deals with the meaning of gender and stigma labels cued by outsiders. Section 5.3 demonstrates the impact of these meanings on formation of status categories in the Bhantu community. The concluding section gives an overview of the analysis.

5.1 Bhantus' Interaction in Inter-Group Situation

After denotification Bhantus got an opportunity to interact more frequently with the people of different caste and social groups living outside the settlement. During interaction they began to come across the following categories of 'outsiders': employer and work-place colleague; welfare officials; social

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* On the basis of interviews and informal discussion, it was found that for Bhantus, the outsiders are urban-middle class and upper caste groups. Henceforth, this term will refer to people belonging to such groups.

workers; and local political leaders; the police; and the customers. This inter-group interaction has brought Bhantus closer to urban middle class. It is noticeable that Bhantu's occupational engagements greatly affected their interaction with 'outsiders'.

It is important to note here that the sustenance of Bhantus' income earning activities indirectly depend on the 'cooperation' which they get from the outsiders. It is found that during inter-group interactions the engagement of Bhantus in secular occupations is recognized but unlike intra-group interaction situation the notion of respectability associated with certain occupations is governed by the definitions of urban middle class, high caste groups. The Bhantus engaged in informal sector or business do get help from outsiders but it is due to sympathy. The outsiders' attitude towards Bhantus living in Basti is a mixture of sympathy and discreet distance.

Although, the involvement of Bhantus or their kins in 'unlawful' income generating activities is discredited by the outsiders, they often give protection to such activities. The men and women of the Bhantu community fulfill various 'demands' of 'outsiders', especially those made by police and the government officials. Interestingly, the women of other social groups are totally indifferent to what Bhantus do. They maintain distance and avoid closer social interaction.

The nature of inter-group interaction is also categorized as cordial, moderately cordial and less cordial. The trend of interaction patterns are exhibited in Tables 5.1.A and 5.1.B.

TABLE 5.1.A

NATURE OF INTER-GROUP INTERACTION REPORTED BY BHANTU MEN

(N = 110)

Nature of inter-group interaction	Employment Status of Respondents						
	Govt. servant	Self employed	Garment factory worker	Worker in Informal Sector	Engaged in 'unlawful' income generating activities	Unemployed	Total
1. Cordial interaction:	25 (22.7)	04 (03.6)	02 (01.8)	02 (01.8)	--	03 (02.7)	36 (32.7)
2. Moderately Cordial Interaction:	19 (17.3)	01 (0.9)	01 (0.9)	--	--	02 (01.8)	23 (20.9)
3. Less Cordial Interaction:	31 (28.2)	05 (04.6)	--	05 (04.6)	10 (09.0)	--	51 (46.4)

Note: The figures in parentheses represent percentage.

It is evident from the responses of Bhantu men in (Table 5.1.A) that majority 32.7 %(i.e. 36) of them are involved in secular occupations and have cordial interaction with outsiders. The majority (22.7%) of these respondents are in government service. The cordiality in inter-group interactions appears to be the result of these respondents' willingness to get assimilated into social mainstream. The men respondent who reported cordial interaction with the outsiders reacted in the following manner:

> **"Outsiders interact with us normally and characterize us as honest (imaandaar) and hard-working (mehanti). They treat us sympathetically because of our helplessness. They know it very well that we are maligned (badnaam) but not really bad."**

It is clear from the above comment that although they are considered as 'normal' and are positively evaluated as hard-working (mehanti) and honest (imandaar), the outsiders response verges more on pity. Outsiders are sympathetic towards the respondents because this group strictly follows the values of urban middle class, high caste groups like pursuing secular occupations and 'separate-spheres' of work for men and women.

The men respondents who report their interaction with outsiders as moderately cordial constitute 20.9% of the total male respondents. Even in their case, the majority (17.3%) are in government service. The general feeling among these respondents is that they aspire to be like outsiders but get put off by their double standards in social relationships. One of them commented:

> **"The outsiders keep us at a distance. They interact with us at the place of work but their behaviour is very arrogant (ghamandi). They consider us as dangerous criminals (khatarnaak apraadhi). In fact, outsiders are hypocrites (dhongi)."**

There is another section of male respondents who report the nature of their interaction with outsiders as less cordial. These respondents are the maximum (46.4%) in number. They include government servants (28.2%), self-employed (4.6%), informal sector workers (4.6%) and 'criminals' (9.0%). This group of respondents feel that less cordial interaction with outsiders is not due to their occupational activities but more importantly because of the prevailing image of the group as criminal . As long as the people of other communities are unaware of the identity of a Bhantu they remain friendly otherwise they become abusive. The reaction of this section of respondents may be summed up by the following comment:

"As long as the outsiders are not aware that we belong to this community their interaction remains normal. The moment they get to know this fact, their behaviour changes. Irrespective of our occupational engagements they treat us as impostors (shatir badmaash), monsters (rakhchas), bastards (haraami), thieves (chor) and fraudulent (chaalbaaz)."

One of the respondents who is a government employee and his wife is exclusively involved in housekeeping substantiated the above by narrating the following incident:

"One day when my wife was travelling in a bus, a lady belonging to a community of outsiders was informally chatting with her. Since it was very hot she not only offered my wife a cold drink near the bus stop where both of them got down but also gave her own address at a nearby posh locality. After having cold drinks both of them walked together to cover a small distance. But the moment my wife pointed the place of her residence the lady got horrified as if she had seen a monster . She at once withdrew herself and called a rickshaw to cover up the remaining distance to her house. She immediately moved away without looking at my wife."

The pattern of inter-group interaction as reported by women respndents are shown in Table 5.1.B

TABLE: 5.1.B

NATURE OF INTER-GROUP INTERACTION REPORTED BY BHANTU WOMEN

(N = 125)

Nature of inter-group interaction	Employment Status of Respondents							
	Govt. servant	Self employed	Garment factory worker	Worker in informal sector	Engaged in 'unlawful' income	Unemployed	House-keeping	Total
1. Cordial interaction:	02 (01.6)	--	--	02 (01.6)	--	--	11 (08.8)	15 (12.0)
2. Moderately Cordial Interaction:	01 (0.8)	01 (0.8)	11 (08.8)	--	15 (12.0)	--	35 (28.0)	63 (50.4)
3. Less Cordial Interaction:	--	--	--	--	31 (24.8)	--	16 (12.8)	47 (37.6

NOTE: The figures in parentheses represent percentage of total number of female respondents.

Out of the total female respondents 12% reported that their interaction with the outsiders is cordial. This section of respondents, include women working in government organization (1.6%) and those engaged in informal sectors (1.6%). The 8.8% of housewives also report their interaction with outsiders as cordial. Interestingly, the interaction between these Bhantu women and women belonging to other social groups is negligible. The views expressed by some of these women may be summarised as follows:

> **"We interact with outsiders at the place of work and have healthy interaction with our husbands' friends' families. We do not have our own friends outside the Basti. Outsiders are good people (achche log). Our Basti people are bad persons (bure log). They cheat outsiders despite the help rendered by them."**

It is clear that this section of women respondents are influenced by the way of living of 'outsiders' so much so that they denigrate their own community by characterizing the members of community as bad people (bure log) and outsiders as good people (achche log). Another section of women respondents (50.4%) mentioned that their interaction with the outsiders is moderately cordial. The majority of such women are housewives (28.0%). A few of them are employed as garment factory workers (8.8%). Interestingly, quite a few of them are also engaged in unlawful activities (12.0%). The responses of these women are reflected in the following comment:

> **"Our interaction with outsiders is tolerable but we do not go to their place. Our husbands and we have only professional interaction with office colleagues and customers."**

The women who report their inter-group interaction as less cordial constitute 37.6 % of all female respondents. The

majority (24.8%) of these are engaged in 'unlawful' activities. The remaining (12.8%) are housewives. A woman who is engaged in prostitution commented:

> **"We have only professional interaction with 'outsiders'. The outsiders visit our place for their interests. Sometimes the outsiders become very open during drinks or in bed. Otherwise they describe us as fiery (aag), what a piece! (maal), louts (awara), predatory women (chinaal), beggars (bikharin) and so on."**

A few housewives who consider their inter-group interaction as less cordial commented:

> **"Whenever we go out of the Basti, people look at us with contempt and are abusive. So, we prefer not to interact with them at all."**

The pattern of responses regarding the nature of inter-group interaction suggest that, by and large, Bhantus are negatively treated by outsiders. In spite of the efforts to maintain cordial interaction with outsiders, Bhantus have to bear social humiliation in inter-group situation. The overarching impact of stigmatization is abundantly clear in Bhantus' interactions with outsiders.

5.2 Meaning of Gender and Stigma Labels and Status Categories

The differentness imputed by outsiders on Bhantus is reflected in the meanings of various labels used in inter-group interaction situation. Table 5.2 shows various types of labels and their implicit meanings for different category of Bhantu respondents. These labels have become inextricably linked with Bhantus' everyday reality. Outsiders use them whenever the identity of Bhantu man or a woman is disclosed.

There is gender-specificity in the meaning of most labels listed in Table 5.2. In other words, labels refer to outsiders' characterization of Bhantu men and women. Thus, certain labels are used only in the case of men while certain others are used for women. A few labels like Bure log, Badnaam and Apraadhi are gender neutral and connote a mild stigmatization of the Bhantu community in general. Furthermore, labels like Imandaar, Mehanti and Achche Log have positive connotation and are used by outsiders for those Bhantus who are closer to their way of life. The remaining labels listed in Table 5.2 indicate deeply discredited traits as seen by outsiders. In other words, they are stigma labels in the present context. It may be noted here that relatively enduring nature of these labels is established by Bhantus' own accounts.

TABLE:5.2

TYPE OF LABELS USED BY RESPONDENTS DURING INTER-GROUP INTERACTION

Category of Respondents	Labels denoting gender bias		Labels denoting stigmatization	
	Male	Female	Normal	Discredited
Respondents maintaining cordial interaction	Imaandaar Mehanti	--	Achche log Imandaar Mehanti	Bure log Badnaam
Respondents maintaining moderately cordial interaction	--	--	--	Khatarnak apraadhi
Respondents maintaining less cordial interaction	Rakshas, Haraami, Chor, Shatir-badmaash, Chaalbaaz	Aag, Awara Chinaal Maal Vaishya Bhikarin	--	Awara, Aag, Chaalbaz, Chinaal, Bhikarin, Haraami, Maal Rakhshas, Chaal-baaz, Shatir-badmaash, Dhongi

NOTE: Refer Appendix C for Glossary of dialect used by Bhatus

The meaning of each label as interpreted by Bhantu respondents is discussed below:

(i) **Aag, Vaishya, Maal, Awaara, Chinaal**

In an inter-group interaction situation these labels suggest a vile sexual quality in Bhantu women. The outsiders in this situation use the labels for prostitutes, gamblers and women engaged in brewing country liquor.

The negative connotations of these labels are not acceptable to Bhantu women. Consequently, there exists a less cordial relationship between the outsiders and the Bhantu women.

(ii) **Achche Log and Bure Log:**

Used by Bhantus as well as by outsiders these labels acquire context specific meanings in inter-group interaction evaluation. To make visible assimilated norms of respectability, Bhantus in their interaction with outsiders see them as 'good' (achche log) and impute discrediting differentness to the members of own community as 'bad' (Bure log). The use of these labels by Bhantus show acceptance of outsiders' definition of good and bad.

(iii) **Bhikarin:**

This label is used by outsiders to show their contempt towards Bhantu women engaged in begging (bikarin).

(iv) **Badnaam:**

This label is used by outsiders to convey their sympathy for Bhantu men engaged in secular occupations. Such labelling during interaction serves two purposes. It makes explicit the sympathy

for a member of a socially maligned (badnaam) community. Such a label also acts as an internal cue for Bhantu men to defend acquired notions of respectability and activate cordial interaction.

(v) **Mehanti:**

The label of hardworking (mehanti) assigned by outsiders acquires positive connotation for Bhantu men engaged in secular occupations encouraging cordial interaction.

(vi) **Imaandaar:**

The label of honest (imaandaar) is coveted by Bhantu men in secular jobs. It has a very positive connotation to offset the traditional evaluation of Bhantus as 'Badnaam', 'badmaash', 'chor' and 'khatarnaak apraadhi'. A very fervent desire of Bhantu men is to be labelled by outsiders as 'Imaandar'.

(vii) **Rakhchas:**

This label highlights the generally prevailing social image of Bhantu men as cruel monsters (rakhchas) in the eyes of outsiders. This label is used for those Bhantus whose interaction with the outsiders is very limited and not at all cordial.

(viii) **Haraami:**

A bastard (haraami) in an intra-group situation is not ostracized or regarded as a degenerate. The same label acquires extremely derogatory connotations in the inter-group situation. Evaluated negatively by outsiders the Bhantus labelled as 'haraami' do not maintain any sort of cordial interaction with the labellers.

(ix) **Chor:**

This label is used by outsiders for negatively evaluating the Bhantu men as thie (chor).

(x) **Shatir Badmaash**

This label is assigned by outsiders to Bhantus to highlight the rowdyism (badmaashi) prevailing in their behaviour in an inter-group interaction situation.

(xi) **Chaalbaaz**

The label of a fraudulent person (chaalbaaz) has overt negative connoations. It is assigned to Bhantu men by outsiders.

(xii) **Ghamandi**

This label is used by Bhantu men to show that the outsiders were arrogant (ghamandi) in their behaviour towards the community. The outsiders by virtue of their superior self evaluation treat Bhantus with explicit contempt.

(xiii) **Katharnaak Aparadhi**

This label highlights concretely the most pervasive perception of outsiders towards Bhantus. The notion of their criminality is never quite far away from the psyche of an outsider and the Bhantus are most often labelled as dangerous criminals 'Katharnaak Aparadhi'

(xiv) **Dhongi**

Used by Bhantus this label highlights the perception of respondents towards the attitude of outsiders. The Bhantus' see the outsiders as hypocrites (dhongi) who exercise dual standards in their conduct.

The meanings of labels indicate two crucial features of gender definitions in inter-group interaction situation. The first aspect is that the masculinity or maleness of Bhantu men is seen in terms of violence and a state of perpetual aggressiveness. The second feature is that femininity or femaleness among Bhantu woman is seen in terms of her sexuality. In this context, the culture specific traits of Bhantus society are negatively evaluated by the 'outsiders'. For example, the unwed mother and her child are negatively evaluated by the outsiders. In fact, the traditional occupations of the Bhantus are discredited by the outsiders.

The meanings further reveal that both men and women respondents are negatively evaluated because the outsiders are suspicious of Bhantu occupational engagements. Sometimes they wrongly characterize Bhantu men and women. Here, the respondents raise a very important issue as to who is evaluating whom or whose labels should prevail. The stigma labels are so deeply embedded in the minds of Bhantus and they are so accustomed to negative labelling that if by chance an 'outsider' even in a good spirit enquires as to what they do or to which community they belong to, they tend to react in a self-denigrating manner by characterizing themselves with the above labels.

The meaning of various labels as discussed above bring out three categories of status patterns in inter-group interaction situation. These inter-group status categories are conformists, challengers and compromisers. The conformists are those Bhantu men and women who maintain cordial interaction with outsiders and seem to conform to their way of life. The challengers include those Bhantu men and women who have less cordial interaction with outsiders. They reject the gender and stigma definitions imputed

by outsiders on them. The compromisers show ambivalence in accepting outsiders norms and maintain moderately cordial interaction with them.

The next section analyses the accounts of Bhantu men and women within these three status categories.

5.3 Analysis of Inter-group Status Positions

The response patterns and the meanings of labels in inter-group interaction situation are indicative of situational variations in the status positions of Bhantus. These situational variations are captured through the analysis of social boundaries, pattern of domination and subordination; and group alignments. The subjectivity involved in constantly changing status positions is analyzed in terms of three status categories idedntified on the basis of inter-group labelling process.

5.3.1. The Conformists

The conformists among Bhantus in inter-group interaction situation are those who reported cordial interaction with the outsiders. They constitute 21.7 per cent of all respondents. The men of this group pursue secular occupations and women are predominantly engaged in housekeeping. The male respondents though positively evaluated by outsiders are under pressure to uphold their reputation as 'mehanti' and 'imaandar'. The need to do so arises by a sense of physical and social segregation created by the respondents' residence in settlement and more crucially by virtue of their being born as a member of a historically maligned (badnaam) community.

This is evident from the account of a Bhantu male employed in a nationalized bank as a cashier. He cited the following:

> "Madam, as a consequence of working in the bank I have quite a few acquaintances who live outside the settlement (Basti) and consider me as hardworking (mehanti) and honest (imandaar) man. Nonetheless, living in the Basti sometimes creates difficulties for us. An instance of which is that whenever anybody commits a mistake in the office, I am the first to be suspected. This is because we are maligned (badnaam) among the outsiders. Some of my colleagues advise me to move away from the settlement to avoid the prejudiced judgment of senior officials in the Bank. Such instances make me sad. .....I spend some evenings with my colleagues who are staying outside the Basti and enjoy their company."

In the same manner, a woman respondent who is wife of a government servant, and is exclusively engaged in house-keeping attempts to conform to the outsiders evaluations. She stated the following:

> "Before marriage, I was interacting mainly with outsiders. But, coming here (in the Bhantu settlement) after marriage has led to complete severance of contacts. Now I am only confined to the house. I am unable to socialize, not even manage to visit the houses of my husband's friends. If at all I do visit them the men of the household are more welcoming than their women. While I am warm towards them they are aloof in their behaviour. Nevertheless, they are also not to be blamed. The outsiders are good and do help the Basti people as and when needed. Its our people who are bad, who commit anti-social activities."

The above accounts are representative of the complex and paradoxical life situation available to conformists. As `challengers' in the intra-group interaction situation they enjoy an elite status. Yet, the act of deploring their community's criminal tendencies is not enough to usher them inside the group of outsiders. There is always a dual tension marking the lives of the conformists. Being members of a historically discredited social group, the conformist cannot do away with the reality of his/her birth. Still, the need to be accepted by the outsiders, makes these respondents conform to the

notions of respectability (izzatdaar), well-behaved (tameezdaar), honest (imaandaar) and hard-working (mehanti).

The response of woman conformist shows the extent to which Bhantu women in an inter-group situation aquire middle class social norms. An 'izzatdaar' 'nazuk' housewife of a government official at one level rejects the labels of 'aag', 'maal', 'chinaal' assigned derogatively by outsiders to Bhantu women. The process of doing so makes her a challenger in an intra-group interaction situation. She revels in her respectable (izzatdaar) status and would like 'other women to become like her'. Ironically, the very labels of 'izzatdaar' and'naazuk' are worn defensively by the female respondent in an inter-group interaction situation. As member of a socially discredited group her evaluation by the outsiders is condescending. Her need to conform to their norms and codes of conduct is marked by an actual response situation whereby "though I am warm, they are aloof in their behaviour." Still, the pressure for conformity is such that she challenges the community people as bad (bure log) and the outsiders as good (achche log). Despite the 'aloofness' the need to sustain the label of 'izzatdaar' is more crucial for the conformist. She tries to balance the contextual mutually opposing notions of 'aag', 'maal' and 'naazuk', 'tameezdaar' together in the inter-group interaction situation.

The overarching stigmatized perception of the Bhantu community penetrates even the respectable insularity of those engaged in government jobs. As is conveyed by the male respondent he is constantly being evaluated by outsiders. The conspicuous view of Bhantus as maligned (Badnaam) makes it all the more imperative for the conformist to retain his reputation as 'mehanti' and 'imaandaar'. Challenging the social

traditional occupations of gambling, liquor-making the conformist is nonetheless under pressure to justify his bonafides as a government employee. Still, in the event of any wrong done the conformist, who has ostensibly challenged various activities of the community, is the one marked out first for scrutiny. Doubts are cast over his integrity. The labels of 'izzatdaar' and 'mehanti' assigned by outsiders can not prevent them from casting aspersions on the respondent. This is because the notion of 'badmaash' and 'apraadhi' are too closely and visibly associated with the Bhantus. Consequently, the male conformist like the female conformist lives a dichotomous experience created by imposition of labels in an interaction situation.

The pattern of domination and subordination indicates that unlike intra-group interaction situation the members of this group in an inter-group interaction situation act as subservient partners to the outsiders. This group of Bhantu conformists lacks relative authority to dictate their terms and conditions on outsiders. They are also not in a position to assign negative labels on them. The woman's access to resources vis-a-vis men and even women is relatively less. They constantly attempt to negotiate their status positions by accepting the evaluation assigned by outsiders. To do this they conscientiously imbibe the notions of 'mehanti', 'imaandaar', 'naazuk' and 'tameezdaar' which are crucial points of difference accepted by outsiders.

The group alignment pattern among conformists men show their constant efforts to befriend their work-place colleagues. "I spend some evenings with my colleagues and enjoy their company." They are often boastful of their non-Bhantu friends "who can do anything for them." The conformist women, on the other hand, do not have friendly relationship with outsiders. In fact, their

inter-group interactions are limited to a small group of their husbands' friends and their families.

In sum, Bhantu conformists in the inter-group interaction situation accept their subservient position in the presence of outsiders.

5.3.2 The Challengers

The 41.7 per cent of the total Bhantu respondents exhibited a tendency to consciously challenge and reject the evaluation of the outsiders. The reason reported by the respondents are: (i) the 'outsiders' make no distinction between a criminal and non-criminal, both are uniformly evaluated by the outsiders; and (ii) the outsiders are hypocrites because the unlawful activities in the settlements are sustained only by the undercover help given by outsiders.

The data available has illustrated that male respondents pursuing secular occupations and women engaged as housekeepers are not able to, despite attempts at conformity, free themselves of stigma of criminality. The male respondents in the category of challengers report their negative evaluation. They are seen as impostors (shatir badmaash); monsters (rakchas); bastards (haraami); thieves (chor) and fraudulent (chaalbaaz). The women respondents in this category report their labelling as fiery (aag); louts (awara); maal (what a piece!); prostitutes (vaishya) and beggars (bhikarin).

The challenger maintains less cordial interaction with the outsiders limited to only professional relationship. They consider outsiders as hypocrites (dhongi) and spare no chance to convey the double standards of outsiders.

The following accounts by a man and woman categorised as challengers show their status vis-a-vis others in the community and outside.

The man who is a known thief said:

> "Madam, I don't socialize with the outsiders and even if I do I shall be known only as the grand-son of dacoit Sultana. People will not treat me as a respectable man. At present, the situation is that if there is a dacoity in the neighbourhood, then everybody suspects me and looks at me as if I am a monster (rakhchas). The police too, search my house first and if they do not get anything they implicate my name in some false case. If I don't bribe the police, I will be behind the bars as I am a thief in official records."

The woman who makes liquor in the settlement justified her activities in the following manner:

> "Madam, the outsiders disapprove this profession but they are the ones who consume our product. In fact, our earnings depend on their consumption. Sometimes, these outsiders become nuisance because they not only booze but also misbehave with us. Once a customer refused to pay the cost of liquor. He started abusing me and hurled abuses at my settlement (basti) people calling them names, prostitute (vaishya), thief (chor) and so on. I got wild and thoroughly thrashed him. In the meantime, a few neighbours, along with my kins, joined hands in beating him. Finally, we threw him outside the Basti. The moment he was out of the Basti he went straight to the police station and lodged a complaint against us. In the complaint he misreported the event and blamed me. The police came at once and tried to arrest us on the pretext of making illicit liquor and beating an innocent man. Finally, with great difficulty and after bribing the police I got rid of the complaint. Now you tell me! Who is bad, me or the customer or the police? Actually outsiders are not aware of the reality, only we are blamed and considered bad in your society."

In additon to those who are engaged in unlawful profesions, the category of challengers also include quite a few men employed in secular organizations and women exclusively involved in housekeeping.

A man who happens to be a factory worker and earns livelihood for his small family by manual work commented:

> **"There is no point in interacting with outsiders. In any case, they are going to abuse us as thieves (chor), imposters (badmaash), and fraudulent (chaalbaaz)."**

The wife of a government employee and mother of three children argued:

> **"Outsiders are no better. Just see the police personnel. They harass people in the Basti just for material gains. I simply avoid most of these outsiders who are hypocrites (dhongi)."**

The above accounts of challenger men and women show total rejection of outsiders' definitions by them. The boundaries of their social behaviour are rigid as compared to conformists who try to befriend outsiders for status enhancementt. There is an explicit desire in most challengers to maintain the identity of their group and avoid interaction with outsiders. Those challengers who are in secular occupations are quite particular about this because they experience the social humiliation most. They also have a tendency to unite the community members against harassment by police and welfare officials.

The challengers are the most hostile section of Bhantus in an inter-group interaction situation. The indirect involvement of police and other government officials in unlawful activities carried out in the settlement has given credence to challengers view point in the Bhantu community. They provide the leadership whenever the group is under attack from 'law enforcement' agencies. The influence of challengers is, however, limited because of the power and authority of official machinery. In normal circumstances, therefore, the challengers remain passive and adhere to the community way of life. They do not tolerate

encroachment on their traditional boundaries by the outsiders and retaliate against any such move by counter labelling the outsiders.

The group alignment pattern of the challengers show that they form small goal oriented groups from among the community members. The awareness of the stigmatized social identity helps in the process of group formation. Sometimes, a non-Bhantu is also included in the group but the relationship with him remains instrumental. For example, an office colleague related to an inspector in the police department, was often invited in the settlement by a challenger man exclusively involved in secular income earning activities. The obvious reason for this expression of friendship was to use his relationship with police inspector at the time of needs.

The Challengers are, thus, the largest and most influential group of Bhantu men and women in inter-group interaction situation.

5.3.3. The Compromisers

The compromisers are those Bhantu men and women who maintain moderately cordial interaction with 'outsiders'. They constitute 36.6 per cent of the total Bhantu respondents. None of the men in this category is engaged in unlawful activities.

The compromiser men generally are pursuing secular occupations but their spouses or kins are engaged in 'unlawful' activities. In the case of women compromiser most of them are housekeepers but a few of them are also pursuing unlawful activities. Here too, the respondents engaged in secular activities have compromised with the unlawful pursuits of their kith and kin.

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It is interesting to see that though the men of this group are not actively involved in 'unlawful' activities they are not able to completely disown responsibility in the unlawful activities of relatives. When they protest then the relatives either extract support of outsiders or enlist help from members of the community which traditionally gives social legitimacy to such occupations. In such a situation the compromisers are disenchanted with the behaviour of outsiders. On the other hand the members of the community are silent on the protest of compromisers because the majority of the Bhantu community is antagonised by the arrogance of outsiders. For most the outsiders remain an alien presence which without direct contact maintains control over the groups psyche.

Irrespective of their occupational status the Bhantus are strongly stigmatized as dangerous criminals by the outsiders. The outsiders keep these respondents at distance especially the women and mainly interact at work-place at garment factory, Basti school. The outsider men have only limited professional interaction with compromiser men and women. As a result the compromisers consider outsiders as arrogant (ghamandi) people. Not successful in complete assimiliation with outsiders the compromisers praise the community who at least recognize their predicament. This general trend is highlighted through some representative account of compromisers which illustrate the dilemma faced by them.

A government employee whose wife is engaged in prostitution deplores his social positions. He said that while his employment in government carries some prestige, the activities of his wife and his community demean him and categorise his evaluation by outsiders. He attempts to cross the boundaries set by his

community but is thwarted not only by his own people but also by the outsiders. The dilemma is compounded by the barriers created by the outsiders. He mentioned:

> **"My wife's profession (i.e. prostitution) creates a very embarrassing situation for me in my office. The outsiders are not aware that it is people of their own society who are helping and promoting my wife to carry on her unlawful activity. Whenever there is a quarrel between two of us on this issue, her customers as well as the police men have beleaguered me. They have beaten me, locked me up besides committing other atrocities. At the same time, the community does not protest against it as my wife is carrying on this age old traditional profession of the community. I find myself helpless in such a situation."**

A woman respondent who is under pressing circumstances takes up brewing of country liquor as her full time occupation. She has compromised by accepting such occupation for the survival of her family but at the same time she is aware of the drawbacks of such occupations. She states:

> **"You are aware that my husband does not contribute anything towards domestic expenses. Instead he creates obstacles for my business. Actually the nature of my job is not good. When the customers get drunk they abuse us. The police men also sometime create false cases against us just because we are not able to grease their palms (bribe). I know that this is affecting the future of our children and they are not able to study but I am helpless. I have to carry on with my occupation in order to survive. I won't even get a government job out of pity because the employer will already see in me a bad woman. I have already been labelled as bad (buri)."**

The female respondent in this category shows discernible unease with her present occupation but in the absence of any alternative sees no other recourse for survival. She is aware of the derogatory labels assigned and yet cannot give up the occupation of liquor-making. The respondent maintains a constant aversion towards the occupation chosen and given the chance would move from the boundaries of conformity into the boundaries of

challenger in the intra-group situation. But, placed as a compromiser in an intra-group interaction situation the respondent is constantly pressurized to balance the labels imposed by outsiders while maintaining contact within the group but aware of its anti-social activities.

In the context of the male respondent placed as a compromiser he is labelled as helpless(bechara) in an inter-group situation. But, he is stigmatized by outsiders for being part of a criminal social group. He has to compromise his own status as a government employee and on account of wife's activities he ends up being neither a total challenger nor a total conformist. He has to compromise on the nature of his own status. Despite being averse to stigmatization by outsiders he has to maintain an unwanted fluidity in his movement within boundaries.

This group of respondents has yielded to the domination by outsiders. The stigmatized labelling has created such an interaction situation whereby the compromisers are not in a position to gather resources or position of power outside the community. Therefore, though the compromiser complains about lack of resources, of being 'helpless' (bechara) and being subjected to labels from outsiders he cannot muster up strength to reject norms of his own group or outsiders. In fact, the outsiders - his wife's customers - gang upto 'beat' him, put him behind the 'bars'. This pattern of subordination is more blatant for the male compromiser. Though not so explicit the woman respondent is actually deprived of concrete empowerment sources. In an inter-group situation a sanction by the Panchayat as given to the respondent here gives relatively dominant position. Such a possibility is not available in an intra-group interaction situation as the respondent not only has to 'survive' but cannot

manage a job outside because of the pre-existing labels on social action.

The ambivalence present in choosing between the two boundaries makes unclear the structural location of this group of respondents. This group tries to reduce the gap between actual and virtual social identity. They manage personal identity by denigrating the activities of their own community. In the event of their failure to align with the outsiders the compromisers regress to their traditional boundaries and voice their disillusionment about hypocrisy (dhong) prevailing in outsiders. They constantly negotiate to redefine their status within and outside the group. The need for negotiation arises out of their flexible social boundaries and enforced patterns of subordination.

5.4 An Overview

It is clear from the analysis of inter-group interaction situation that the respondents occupational engagements have a much lesser impact on mutual evaluations and relationships. The meanings of Labels used by outsiders to characterize Bhantus, approximate more closely with their stigmatized image than to the notion of 'maleness and femalenes'. The engagement of Bhantus in 'unlawful' activities is deeply discredited by the outsiders.

Unlike the 'peculiar structure' found in intra-group labelling, there is evidence of clear cut demarcation and attribution of status in inter-group interaction situation. The clear cut assigning of these labels illustrates the control exerted by outsiders on the Bhantus self-evaluation. The three categories of status groups among Bhantus showed that the conformists, though they

conform to the boundaries of outsiders,are not treated as elites. In fact, they remain subservient partners of outsiders during inter-group interaction situations. They try to redefine their status under the influence of norms and values of the outsiders. The challengers rigidly follow the traditional boundaries of Bhantu community offended by negative evaluations of their status by the outsiders. They negotiate to bargain their social positions by questioning the values of outsiders through counter labelling. The compromisers do make efforts to redefine their status positions to break the stereotyped image of Bhantus by conforming to outsiders boundaries of behaviour. When they fail in their attempt at conformity they regress to their traditional norms of Bhantu society. The stigma attached to the social status of Bhantus affects the interaction dynamics of members in each of the three categories. The analysis brings out the impact of stigma labelling. The analysis clearly indicates that stigma labelling has an overarching affect on status position of Bhantus and also reveals situational variations in relative social positions of the Bhantus.

CHAPTER-VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter an attempt is made to summarize the contents of the present study. It contains an overview of research problem, conceptual framework, objectives of the study and major findings. The chapter further discusses contributions of the study and certain limitations therein. Finally, the scope for further research on disadvantaged groups of India is also highlighted.

The aim of the study was to understand how "imputed differentness" or labelling affects social status in a culturally unique social group known as Bhantu. The Government of India during British rule had defined Bhantus as one of the criminal tribes. Though, after Independence, the official stigma of criminality has been removed by legislation, it still persists and affects their interaction within the group and with outsiders. Thefocus of the study is to attempt an interpretative understanding of Bhantus' predicament in a transitional social environment. The objectives of the study were as follows: (i) to delineate changes in Bhantus' socio-economic life over a period of time; (ii) to describe socio-demographic profile of Bhantu households; (iii) to examine the nature of labelling in intra- and inter-group interaction situations with special reference to gender and stigma attributions; and (iv) to analyse the impact of gender and stigma labelling on social status through Bhantus' accounts of their intra- and inter-group interactions.

The labelling or imputed differentness is an all pervasive phenomenona in social interaction. It refers to processes of

control which involve valuation, regulation and management of social positions in social situations. It essentially denotes an act of classification that puts mutually interacting actors in meaningful social categories. In the present study the process of labelling and its significance in social actors' attempts to define their status positions has been approached from the perspective of social situation and the public order sustained within them.

The focus of investigation is on two primary types of labelling in human interactions viz., Gender and Stigma. This specific focus is prompted by two previously known facts about Bhantus' social life: first, their stigmatization as criminals; and second, absence of 'separate-sphere' based division of labour between Bhantu men and women.

Gender and stigma labelling have been conceptualized, in the study, as modes of communicating perceived 'differentness' in intra- and inter-group interaction situations. As "allocative processes" both gender and stigma labelling are seen as influencing "situated identity" or "social status of individuals". The social status of Bhantu was analysed through the boundaries of social behaviour; patterns of domination and subordination; and group alignments. For the purpose of comparison, Bhantus' interaction patterns have been studied in two types of situations - involving interaction within the group (intra-group) and interaction with outsiders (inter-group).

To carry out the empirical investigation, the primary data from 125 Bhantu households was drawn by 'Domal sampling'. In each household a male and a female, preferably a married couple was intensively interviewed with the help of an interview schedule. The primary data was also supplemented by informations

gathered through oral history and group interviews. Relevant secondary information was gathered from media and official records.

On the basis of historical accounts and secondary data it was found that Bhantus' socio-economic life has passed through three crucial phases. During Pre-Settlement phase (Before the enactment of Criminal Tribes Act of 1871) the Bhantus lived unsettled life and in the absence of any legitimate means of earning livelihood, they resorted to thefts, burglary, prostitution etc. During this period the Panchayat's authority was all pervasive. The dominant values guiding gender were 'gallantry' and 'sexual charm' with no 'separate-sphere' of work for men and women. The practice of bride-price in marriage was an index of women's relative position vis-a-vis men in the community.

In the Post Settlement Phase (After the enactment of Criminal Tribes Act of 1871), the Bhantus were arrested and sent to various jails and also were deported to Andaman and Nicobar Islands. They were made to live in settlement in 1922, the British Government introduced formal education and created a possibility for Bhantus to earn a regular income. Simultaneously, restrictions were imposed on their movements outside the settlement. The consequences of this settlement were: (a) the emergence of sex-based division of labour which also became dominant value defining gender; (b) the declining significance of bride-price; (c) exposure to formal education; and (d) residential segregation leading to stigmatization.

During Post Denotification phase (1952 onwards) the Bhantus were included in the list of scheduled castes which gave them access to protective measures like reservation in education and

employment, free housing etc. The changes brought about by these measures are reflected in the socio-economic profile of the Bhantus included in this study.

The profile of Bhantus show that immigration into the settlement is essentially due to marriage. The age pattern of the Bhantus show that the respondents are in working age group. Data on marriage showed that fifteen households were headed by women. The practice of 'dowry' became common in the Bhantu community as a result of interaction with urban middle class groups. The average size of Bhantu household is relatively large. The family structure is largely nuclear but extended family ties are not neglected. The bride-price is merely a symbolic ritual at present.

The literacy levels of the respondents show that majority of them are literate, but there are sex-differentials as one moves to higher levels of education. The respondents are engaged in two kinds of occupational activities: secular, and 'unlawful'. Quite a few women respondents are exclusively involved in house-keeping. The proportion of those employed in 'unlawful' activities is high in the case of female respondents. The income profile shows that the average income of the households is not very low but a cross tabulation of household size by income indicates that majority of large households have income below the average income. It further shows that the earnings of men respondents is twice as high as that of women respondents, which probably has revived the propensity of women respondents to involve themselves in 'unlawful' occupations.

The description of the profile is important in understanding social status of Bhantus. This data is not adequate to understand the meaning that actors attach to their social

status. For an interpretative understanding of subjects' meanings, excerpts from in-depth interviews of the respondents are utilized. The analysis of Bhantus' accounts has helped in understanding the influence of labelling on their relative social positions both within the community and in their position vis-a-vis other social groups.

The analysis of intra- and inter-group interaction situations presented in Chapters IV and V shows a clear cut situational variation in subjective meanings of gender and stigma labels. This leads to corresponding changes in subjectively defined, negotiated and redefined aspects of dynamic social positions. For example, it was found that in intra-group interaction situation the occupational involvements of respondents determined the nature of interaction they have with fellow members of the group. The involvement in crime is not interpreted as a discredited act even though it is disapproved by a few members of the group. Mutual evaluations were more influenced by gender definitions than by stigma. On the contrary in inter-group interaction, stigma labelling has an over arching influence.

Three types of status categories were identified for the purpose of analysis. It was found that the subjectively perceived status of individuals is highly context dependent. For instance, a large proportion of the challengers contribute to the fragmentation of structure within the group by questioning traditional boundaries of behaviour. During intra-group interaction, they tend to conform to the 'outsiders' boundaries by practicing secular occupations and by favouring 'separate-sphere' of work for men and women. The menfolk of this category are dominant in family as well as community affairs. Although

this group of respondents tend to denigrate the social practices of their own community, they are positively evaluated within the community. They maintain cordial interaction and have social identity of an exclusive elite group in the community. However, their experience during inter-group interaction shows that the 'outsiders' acknowledge their attempts to enter the outsiders' boundaries. Their attitude is more of sympathy. The challengers who conform to the boundaries of outsiders experience a change of status in inter-group situation. Unlike the male respondents who maintain professional relations with outsiders the women respondents of this category hardly interact with outsiders. Interestingly, in inter-group interactions this group of respondent are less powerful, always manage their 'personal identity' and try to associate with outsiders as subservient partner.

A relatively less number of conformists of intra-group interaction situation invariably challenge and reject the outsiders' cultural boundaries. Their involvement in traditional occupations (theft, liquor-distillation, prostitution etc.) is disapproved by a large group of community members and therefore they have less cordial interaction with them. Their gender bias in use of labels indicates that the mannish qualities and sexual charm among women of this group is praised but the men are negatively evaluated for their 'criminal' activities. This group of respondents is less rigid in following sex-based division/separate-sphere of work. The conformists in intra-group interaction situation become challengers in inter-group interaction situation. As long as the outsiders are not aware of the involvement of these Bhantus in criminals activities, they behave normally but the moment it is known to them they reject

them. In both the interaction situations this group of respondents remain subservient to the other categories and the women of this group not only dominate over their menfolks but sometimes on 'outsiders' also. It is clear that the influence of this group in intra and inter-group situation is minimal but ironically, they become the point of reference for the whole Bhantu community. Their group alignment pattern shows that they have small peer group of people involved in criminal activities and exhibit hostility towards outsiders. They are least affected by their social identity and question definitions imputed by the outsiders.

The category of compromisers appears to endorse the norms of their own group in some context and that of the outsiders in some other context. A substantial number of compromisers criticize the 'anti-social' income generating activities of their family members. They are regarded as helpless. The women of this community are labelled as helpless and unlike men of this category get cooperation from community. Interestingly, the women of this group are dominant within the family and men of this category feel uncomfortable under women's domination but remain passive. As a result they fail to associate with any group and maintain moderately cordial interaction within the community. During inter-group interaction many respondents showed ambivalence in accepting outsiders' definitions. Their interaction with outsiders is moderately cordial, who, though sympathetic maintain discreet distance. As a result of lack of recognition from outsiders to their partial acceptance of 'outsiders' boundaries the compromisers regress to their traditional way of living. In their interaction within and

outside the group they always try to get secondary gains by showing their helplessness.

What is common to all the three categories is that the meanings attached to their social positions are flexible and they attempt to redefine their status positions through negotiations. The response patterns in the day-to-day interaction of the Bhantu respondents in two situations (intra- and inter-group) may be represented as follows:

TABLE: 6.1

RESPONSE PATTERNS OF BHANTUS IN INTRA-GROUP AND INTER-GROUP INTERACTION SITUATIONS

Intra-group boundaries of behaviour	Inter-group boundaries of behaviour		
	Conformists	Compromisers	Challengers
Challengers	x		
Compromisers		x	
Conformists			x

The subjectvity involved in the interaction situation gives the impression of the shortlived nature of their responses. Nevertheless, the awareness and acceptance of Bhantus history in the study enchances the scope of application of symbolic interactionist perspective.

This study seeks to contribute in understanding the status of Bhantus about whom there is scant or little information in the literature on criminal tribes. The study has attempted to apply symbolic interactionist perspective to understand Bhantus' subjectively felt status position.

Following this perspective the study attempted to understand social status in terms of boundaries, domination and group alignment. This work also revealed that gender is socially constructed and varies over time.

The study has limitation in that the finding cannot be generalised for all disadvantaged groups. Further research on other disadvantaged groups in different parts of the country can be carried out.

The limitations mentioned earlier, in fact put forth various research questions and openings to be explored in future. Some of these specific issues may be listed as below.

On the basis of empirical findings of the current socio-demographic profile, the areas which are worth exploring among 'ex-criminals' with the same background like Bhantus are their attitudes towards family planning and birth control practices. Most of the respondents not only have big family size but also are liberal to open-sex relations because of their professional commitments and cultural practices. Thus, there is a need to explore the areas which are hazardous for physical and mental health of 'ex-criminals'. For example, there is always a risk of over population, spread of diseases like AIDS among Bhantus in particular and 'ex-criminals' with similar background in general.

The construction of gender can be studied in contexts like family and marriage among denotified groups as these groups are greatly affected by their cultural practices. For example, changes in concept of 'separate sphere' of work for men and women over a period of time among Bhantus or changes in marriage exchange practices from bride-price to dowry, will give new insight to study the shifts in the definition of gender or in other words gender construction.

A comparative study of other denotified communities from a nearby settlement will benefit the researchers.

In the recent past researches have been questioning the politics of labelling in development policies for disadvantaged groups (Wood, 1985). This politics of labelling is evident in the case of Bhantus situation too. This is also evident from the accounts of Bhantus who state how the politics of labelling is creating problems in the interaction between the Bhantus and agents of social control (the police). The mutual distrust between the 'ex-criminals' and social control machinery has led to increase in criminal instances. Hence, there is need to study the interaction between the police and 'ex-criminals'. This may provide more effective coping strategies for dealing with increasing crime rate among ex-criminals.

It is also evident from the findings of the study that the social distance may be due to the inclusion of 'ex-criminals' in the list of scheduled caste after their denotification. This may be demonstrated by developing a social distance scale.

Though this study is not designed to come out with policy recommendation, on the basis of the observations and accounts of the Bhantus, the following measures may be suggested to ameliorate the conditions of the Bhantus:

(i) The stigma attached on residence in the Basti settlement is a manifestation of prevailing stereotyped image of Bhantus. To gradually erase these stereotypes based on residential segregation an attempt can be made to integrate Bhantus with outsiders in terms of initiating a practical measure like their residential dispersion among outsiders.

(ii) On the basis of the socio-economic profile and status accounts of Bhantus it has been noticed that the effective implementation of Welfare programmes is lacking especially in the case of Bhantu women. Thus, a gender based plan incorporating the practical and strategic needs of Bhantu women can be evolved to prevent their further marginalization.

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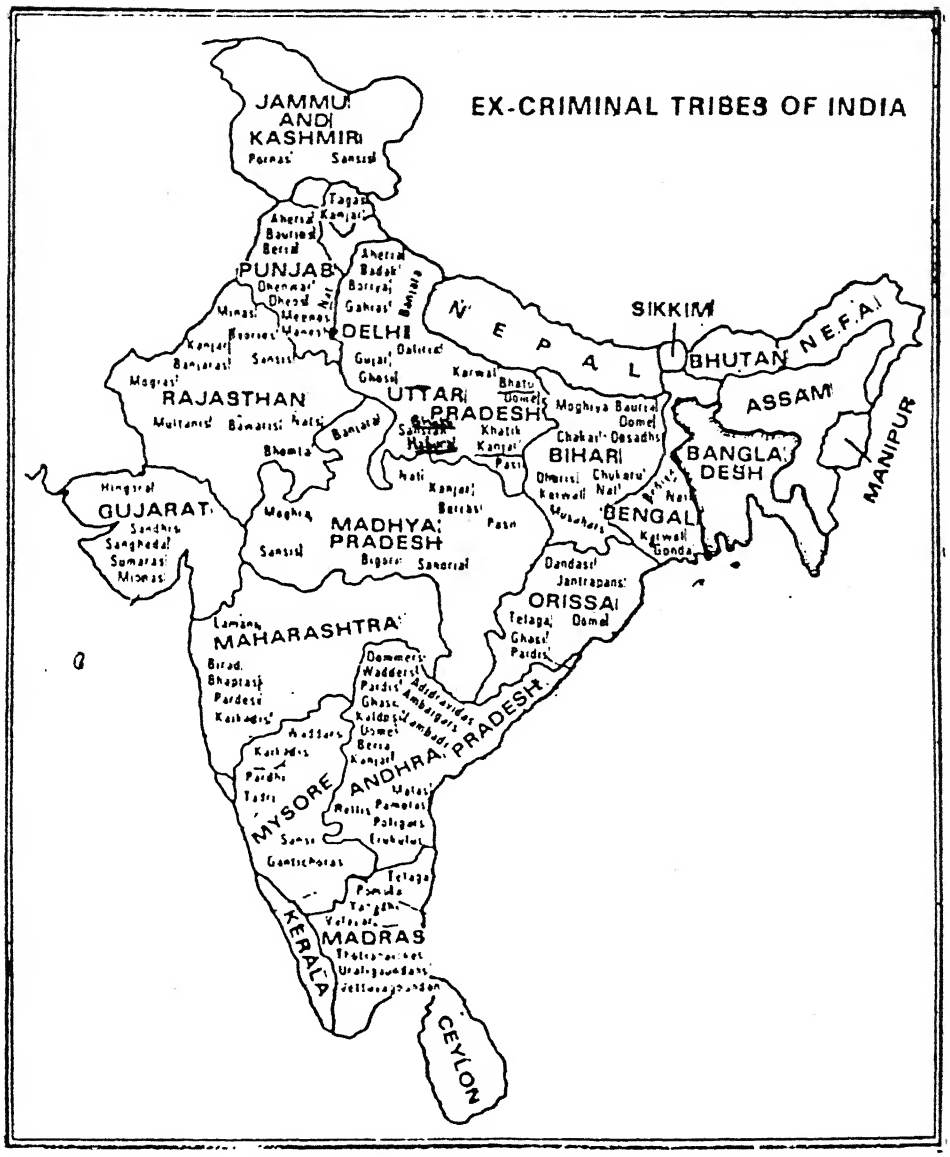
APPENDIX A

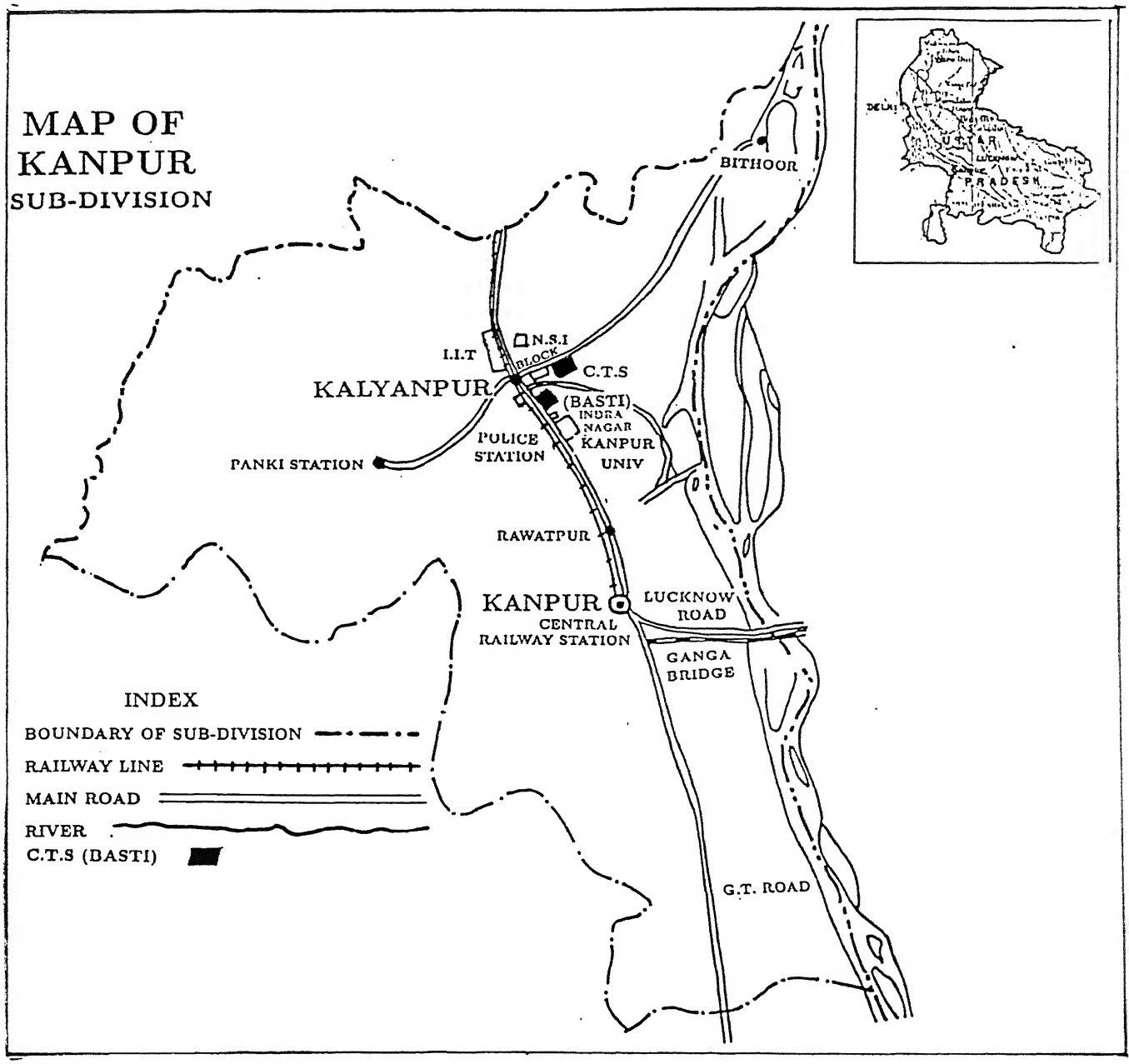
A Map of Ex-Criminal Tribes of India



Source : D.N. Majumdar, *Races and Culture of India*, Bombay : Asia Publishing House, 1961, p. 374.

APPENDIX B

Map of Kanpur showing the location of the settlement in Kalyanpur



APPENDIX C

The Glossary of Local Dialects of Bhantus

Aag	fiery
Acche log	good people
Awara	lout
Badnaam	defamed
Basti	settlement
Bechara	poor man
Bechari	poor thing!
Bhikarin	begger
Bindaas	care-free
Bure log	bad people
Buri	bad
Chalbaaz	fraudulent
Chinaal	predatory women
Chor	thief
Damdaar	strong
Darubaaz	drunkard
Diler	courageous, fearless
Dhong	hypocracy
Dhongi	hypocrite
Galat-Dhande	ill-reputed jobs
Garib	poor thing!
Ghamandi	arrogant
Haraami	bastard
Izzatdar	reputed
Imaandaar	honest and sincere
Juaari	gambler
Kaamchor	malingerer
Khatarnaak-apradhi	dangerous criminals
Lootere	robber
Maal	what a piece!
Majboor	helpless
Majboori	helplessness
Mard	mannish
Mehanti	hardworking
Memsahib	madam
Mootha	bride-price
Naazuk	delicate; fragile
Panchayat	local self-government
Rakhchas	monster
Rickshaw	a three wheelar cycle pulled by man
Sarkari naukar	government servant
Sarkari naukari	government service
Sharif	respectable
Shatir badmash	imposter
Shutterbaaz	shutterlifter
Tameezdar	well-behaved
Vaishya	prostitute

APPENDIX D

The Collage